

From Loot to Scholarship: Changing Modes in the Italian Response to Byzantine Artifacts, ca. 1200–1750

ANTHONY CUTLER

In a post-colonial world one pervasive response to the possession and display of objects made by other peoples is to see them all as ill-gotten gains, pieces torn from their “original” setting by ruthless individuals representing unsympathetic, even predatory societies; in short, to regard them as loot. On this view, as far as Byzantium is concerned, the arch-villains were the Venetians and the prime exhibit their treasury in the ducal church of San Marco. Unaware of how most of the objects on exhibit ended up in this situation, we generally assume that they are booty, pathetic evidence of acts of rapine, committed in 1204 against the involuntary victim that was Constantinople, in circumstances to which the chief witnesses are the crusader-chroniclers Geoffrey Villehardouin and Robert de Clari. Our unspoken protest is only reinforced when an artifact is in the state that we tacitly prefer for plunder: extant not merely in an alien context¹ but forced into an “unnatural” relation—like the Byzantine ivory triptychs dismembered to make Latin book covers²—with one or more objects to which it does not belong. The combination lends a further air of mystery to something which is, from the start, enigmatic to us. Such is the *mélange* known today as the “Grotto of the Virgin,” consisting of what is said to be a votive crown of Leo VI, now joined to a classical (?) rock crystal and a Western, silver-gilt statuette (Fig. 1).³ Final proof, if proof is needed, of the mayhem done to this imperial object is the fact that while six of the crown’s enameled medallions are missing, that depicting the emperor now adjoins one of St. Mark, a juxtaposition which, in a Venetian context, can hardly be accidental. We have learned well the lesson concerning the political use in the West of hallowed objects from the East.⁴

¹The matter of medieval artifacts removed from their original setting, and the problems for our responses caused by such *arrachage*, have recently been astutely analyzed by W. Tronzo, “The Medieval Object Enigma and the Problem of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo,” *Word and Image* 9 (1993), 197–228, esp. 197–200.

²A. Cutler, *The Hand of the Master: Craftsmanship, Ivory, and Society in Byzantium (9th–11th Centuries)* (Princeton, 1994), 21, 145, 169, 215–16.

³D. Alcouffe and M. E. Frazer, in *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, ed. D. Buckton (Milan-London, 1984), no. 8; A. Grabar in H. R. Hahnloser, ed., *Il Tesoro di San Marco, II: Il Tesoro e il museo* (Florence, 1971), no. 92.

⁴D. Pincus, “Christian Relics and the Body Politic: A Thirteenth-Century Relief Plaque in the Church of San Marco,” in *Interpretazioni veneziane: Studi di storia dell’arte in onore di Michelangelo Muraro*, ed. D. Rosand (Venice, 1984), 39–57; M. Jacoff, *The Horses of San Marco and the Quadriga of the Lord* (Princeton, N.J., 1993).

Yet, for our present purposes, much that we need to know about this hybrid object remains untold. Even if the figure of Mary is truly a Venetian work of the thirteenth century,⁵ it was not necessarily made for this *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The date when and the circumstances under which it entered the treasury are unknown: the record of it in an inventory of 1325⁶ provides of course only a *terminus ante quem*. Its function, too, is still cryptic. The inventory's description of it as a shrine (*ecclesiola*) might be meaningful if we had analogous creations, but only then if we knew what such shrines were used for. Without this information, the Venetian attitude toward at least one piece of supposed loot from Constantinople remains obscure.

Nonetheless, the obvious difference between a position that permits such use and the implicitly condemnatory attitude toward plunder of those who look back from the privileged position of the late twentieth century allows us to see that opinions regarding the appropriation of alien goods do not remain uniform. They are, rather, expressions of larger, cultural frames of reference. This being the case, such attitudes, like the behavior that prompts them, cannot be constants. In what follows, I shall try to demonstrate that Italian responses to the acquisition of Byzantine things varied over time. My object is less to show the relativity of moral judgments than to argue that judgments of this sort were conditioned partly by changing views of Byzantium itself and partly by the mutable uses to which palpable expressions of its culture were put in various regions and periods. I trust it is clear that by "uses" I intend applications that transcend purely pragmatic ends. By the terms "loot," "splendor," and "scholarship"—the three heads under which I examine these ends—I describe the customary but by no means exclusive purposes that Byzantine artifacts were made to serve.⁷

Of course these purposes could overlap and intersect. In Venice, as in Byzantium, the parade of booty was a potent vehicle of political triumphalism.⁸ And, as we shall see, scholars and artists could interpret artifacts from the East in ways quite different from those of their patrons who displayed them in trophy cases. Yet successive periods in Italian history do evince differences characterized by novel responses. The period of "loot" corresponds roughly with the interval between Venice's agency in the Latin conquest of Constantinople and the full flowering of humanism; that of "splendor" with an age that extends from Medicean Florence to the late-sixteenth-century Roman concern with pristine Christianity; and that of "scholarship" with the time when savants all over Italy realized that Byzantium was submerged forever under the Ottoman tide and that if it was to be recovered, testimony was more likely to be found in their own libraries and *musei* than in Istanbul and other areas possessed by the Turks. These last were direct

⁵M. E. Frazer, in Buckton, *Treasury of San Marco*, 123.

⁶R. Gallo, *Il Tesoro di San Marco e la sua storia* (Rome-Venice, 1967), 278, no. 18; A. Grabar, in M. Muraro and A. Grabar, *Les trésors de Venise: la basilique de Saint-Marc et son trésor* (Geneva, 1963), 47–59, no. 1, had earlier suggested that Leo VI gave the crown to the Venetian church of San Zaccaria, which he founded. This notion is not repeated in Hahnloser, *Il Tesoro*, where, however, it is argued that the rock crystal is a Byzantine work of the 10th or 11th century.

⁷By design, references to manuscripts are greatly restricted. Books had their own destinies and uses. For the latter, see R. S. Nelson, "The Italian Appreciation and Appropriation of Illuminated Byzantine Manuscripts, ca. 1200–1450," *DOP* 49 (1995), pp. 209–35.

⁸J. W. Barker, "Byzantium and the Display of War Trophies: Between Antiquity and the Byzantines," in *To Ελληνικόν: Studies in Honor of Speros Vryonis, Jr.*, ed. J. S. Langdon et al. (New Rochelle, N.Y., 1993), 45–58.

heirs to the legacy of Constantinople, whereas Italians could be only appropriators or conservators. Byzantium was now ineluctably part of the past, a situation very different from the Dugento when the wholesale importation of artifacts from the Christian East began, and even from the subsequent period when Constantinople appeared to offer means of access to the world of Greece and Rome.

If the first of these eras represents what were (in the cities of northern and central Italy) the last centuries of the Middle Ages, the second and third coincide with those that Michel Foucault called the “Renaissance” and “Classical” periods. For him, these two ages framed one of the “great discontinuities in the *episteme* of Western culture,”⁹ a gulf even greater than that which separated the Renaissance from the Middle Ages. For our purposes, these changes represent shifts from a time when Byzantium could, first, be taken and then retaken by military action, to a time when it could be recovered only intellectually, as part of a broader effort to regain the ancient world, and, finally, to a time of recognition that Byzantium was a culture *sui generis*. This last era saw the beginning of those antiquarian studies of Byzantium that are the subject of the last part of this paper.

1. THE QUESTION OF LOOT

To the extent that the term “loot” describes an arena of motivation as much as an act of execution, the proof text for western European anticipations of the material riches of Constantinople is the famous letter allegedly written in 1090 or 1091 by Alexios I to Robert of Flanders.¹⁰ Having catalogued many of the relics available to Christians in the Byzantine capital, the soi-disant emperor goes on to tell of “the treasure vaults of the churches of Constantinople [which] abound in silver, gold, gems, precious stones and silken garments,” the last “sufficient,” he says, “for all the churches of the world,” while “the inestimable treasure of the mother church, namely St. Sophia, . . . surpasses the treasures of all other churches and, without doubt, equals the treasury of the temple of Solomon.” Not content with having whetted appetites for ecclesiastical σκεύη the writer enlarges upon “the infinite treasures of the nobles” and asserts that no one can measure “the treasure of the common merchants.” Being ostensibly a Byzantine letter, the thought of booty is, of course, not explicitly entertained, but its implicit scope is conveyed by the promise that the haul would potentially include “not only the treasure of the Constantinopolitan emperors . . . but the treasure of all the ancient Roman emperors [which] has been brought thither and hidden in the palaces.” Preceding this invitation to temptation is the exculpatory statement that “it is better that you should have Constantinople than the pagans”; it concludes with the injunction “act while you still have time; and then you will have not doom, but a reward in heaven.”

Philological concerns with the authenticity of this letter¹¹ miss the point. The document perfectly defines the horizon of Western expectations of the capital: its streets, in short, are paved with gold and the Latin looter has but to reach out and take it. As if to

⁹M. Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris, 1966), 13.

¹⁰H. Hagenmeyer, *Epistulae et chartae ad historiam primi belli sacri spectantes quae supersunt aevo aequales ac genuinae* (Innsbruck, 1901), 129–38. I cite the translation of E. Joranson, “The Problem of the Spurious Letter of Emperor Alexius to the Count of Flanders,” *AHR* 55 (1950), 811–32.

¹¹See the literature cited by C. M. Brand, *s.v.* Robert of Flanders in *ODB*, III, 1800.

justify this reading, the primary sources for the Fourth Crusade teem with references to plunder. Itemizing gold, silver, plate, precious stones, and garments of silk, vair, and ermine, Robert de Clari avers that two-thirds of the world's wealth is to be found in Constantinople, while Villehardouin takes an oath, on his honor as marshal of Champagne, that "depuis quele [*sic*] monde fut créé, il ne fut fait tant de butin en une ville."¹² These subjective responses are vastly more telling than any degree of historiographical accuracy. They are, moreover, confirmed by Niketas Choniates who, in his eyewitness account of the sack, returns again and again to the matter of booty (σκῦλα).¹³ The Byzantine chronicler's use of the term is the more remarkable in that the long tradition to which he appealed by means of this word offered stringent sanctions against plunder on the battlefield, booty being a regulated and collective quantum to be controlled and distributed *ex post facto*.¹⁴ Yet the reality, if not the right, of the victor's access to his spoils remained a living concept for the Greeks even in the last quarter-century of the empire's existence. Reporting the Byzantine delegation's recognition in San Marco of treasures removed from the Pantokrator monastery more than two hundred years earlier, Syropoulos invoked what he calls the "law of booty" (νόμος τῆς λείας).¹⁵

The theft of the Pala d'Oro and other κειμήλια now in the Venetian treasury has dominated views of the division of the spoils of the Fourth Crusade; it has also distorted our understanding of the complexity and chronology of this part of the *Partitio*. Due as much to the Count de Riant's *Exuviae sacrae constantinopolitanae*,¹⁶ the prevailing picture is of booty hurriedly exported in, and immediately after, 1204 to two main regions, Venice and the francophone countries. Similarly, in defiance of the evidence of the objects themselves and of the textual accounts that we have of some of them, it has led to the identification as loot of artifacts that reached the West more slowly, more indirectly, and for reasons other than is suggested by the myths that surround many such pieces and their sometimes Mosan containers in Belgian collections.¹⁷ Among these, for example, is the crown, now in the Musée Diocesain in Namur, allegedly sent by the emperor Henry of Hainault to the marquis Philippe le Noble after 1206 (but before 1218 when it is first attested in an inventory).¹⁸ While the thorn relics that the crown is said to contain might be considered *furta sacra*,¹⁹ their setting is less usefully understood as booty than as a

¹²The *loca classica* are R. de Clari, *La conquête de Constantinople*, ed. P. Lauer (Paris, 1924), 80, line 6 through 81, line 19, and G. de Villehardouin, *La conquête de Constantinople*, ed. E. Faral (Paris, 1961), 53.

¹³N. Choniates, *Historia*, ed. J. L. van Dieten (Berlin-New York, 1975), 586, lines 79–81; 589, line 45; 594, line 6; 648, lines 35–36.

¹⁴For the streams of legal and military theory underlying the concept of σκῦλα, see E. McGeer, *s.v.* Booty in *ODB*, I, 309.

¹⁵V. Laurent, *Les "Mémoires" du Grand Ecclésiarque de l'Eglise de Constantinople Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le concile de Florence (1438–1439)* (Paris, 1971), 222, line 27.

¹⁶Count de Riant, *Exuviae sacrae constantinopolitanae*, 2 vols. (Geneva, 1876); for the third volume, by F. de Mély, see note 26 below.

¹⁷J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, "L'art byzantin en Belgique en relation avec les Croisades," *RBAHA* 56 (1987), 13–47. No parallel census exists for Italy and it is not my intention to provide one.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 21–22, 36.

¹⁹The notion that the object was the crown of Christ seems to be no older than Andrea Dandolo (*Chronica per extensum descripta*, ed. E. Pastorello, *Raccolta degli storici italiana* 12, pt. 1 [Bologna, 1939], 280, lines 10–13), who also reports that Henry sent *alias preciosas reliquias* to the king of France.

diplomatic gift,²⁰ a sweetener from the Latin emperor reminding his younger brother of the relation between family loyalty and Christian piety. Holy goods could also reach the north circuitously, and interestingly for our present concerns, through Italy. Thus a Byzantine staurothèque now in the Feron-Stoclet collection in Brussels came from the church of San Stefano in Venice,²¹ where it is said to have been brought from Constantinople by “the doge Morosini.”²² If this origin is accurately described, it would establish not only the provenance of the silver-gilt object, inscribed at length in unaccented Greek uncial, but also be our first witness to a phenomenon that we shall repeatedly encounter—the delayed arrival in Italy of pieces all too often supposed to be fruit of the loot of 1204. For now, however, the important point is that even objects that ended up in the Low Countries, where so many Crusaders originated, found their way there only after a sojourn in Italy. This indirection remained the case long after the period with which we are, for the moment, concerned. The icon of the Pantokrator at Chimay, for instance, still inhabits a silver casket of the last quarter of the fifteenth century, bearing an inscription that recalls the donation of this miniature mosaic to Philippe de Croy, lord of Chimay, by Pope Sixtus IV (1471–84).²³

The best-known example of a sacred artifact’s roundabout route to France is the Crown of Thorns formerly in the Sainte-Chapelle. Even if major discrepancies exist between the various accounts of the way in which it reached Louis IX, there is no reason to regard it as an object of loot. Andrea Dandolo, under the year 1238,²⁴ reports that it was one of a group of relics offered to the Latin Empire by John (III) Vatatzes in exchange for military help. A few pages later²⁵ he describes how the French king sent ambassadors to Venice to redeem the relics that Vatatzes had given in pawn to the Venetians. Later scholarship has identified Baldwin II as the agent in their transfer to Paris, seeing in him either the crown’s donor to the French king²⁶ or as a penurious emperor who pledged it as security for a loan from the Venetian banker, Nicola Quirino; the latter took delivery of the crown from Constantinople and then sold it to Louis.²⁷ Whichever version

²⁰ Byzantine diplomatic gifts have recently been treated as a genre by R. Cormack, “But is it Art?” in *Byzantine Diplomacy*, ed. J. Shepard and S. Franklin (Aldershot, 1992), 219–36. Another group of objects that similarly resists classification as loot are pieces that seem to have been long in Latin hands in the East before their removal to western Europe. Representative of these are the Zaccaria cross (note 29 below) and the Virgin and child icon in the Palazzo Bianco in Genoa, on which see L. Tagliaferro, “L’ ‘Eleusa’ di Pera a Genova,” *Bollettino dei Musei Civici Genovesi* 6 (1984), 17–23.

²¹ A. Frolov, *La relique de la Vraie Croix: recherches sur le développement d’un culte* (Paris, 1961), no. 261; Lafontaine-Dosogne, “L’art byzantin,” 36.

²² As opposed to Tommaso Morosini, the first Latin patriarch of Constantinople (1204–11), the only member of this family to become doge of Venice after the Fourth Crusade was Marino Morosini (1249–53).

²³ I. Furlan, *Le icone bizantine a mosaico* (Milan, 1979), no. 29.

²⁴ Dandolo, *Chronica*, 295, lines 3–7. For the destruction in 1793 of the Grande Châsse that contained the crown, see M.-M. Gauthier, *Les routes de la Foi: reliques et reliquaires de Jérusalem à Compostelle* (Freiburg, 1983), 162.

²⁵ Dandolo, *Chronica*, 297, lines 21–24.

²⁶ F. de Mély, *Exuviae sacrae constantinopolitanae*, III (Paris, 1904), 172, 269–70.

²⁷ F. de Mély, “Reliques de Constantinople,” *RArtChr*, 4th ser., 42 (March 1899), 92; Frolov, *La relique*, 429 note (a), rejects the belief that the crown (together with a fragment of the True Cross and other relics) was pawned, preferring the 13th-century account known as the *Translatio sancte corone D. N. Ihesu Christi a Constantinopolitana urbe ad civitatem Parisiensem*, ed. E. Miller, *JSav* (1878), 292–303.

of the story is true, it is clear that Venice was a way station on the crown's route northward.

Yet, although Venice continued to receive relics and, no doubt, their often precious containers throughout the course of and beyond the Latin regime in the capital,²⁸ the latter was by no means the only source²⁹ nor the Serenissima the only point of arrival in the West. The name of John III Vatatzes crops up again in the "biography" of the staurothèque brought from Nicaea to Cortona where it remains, the largest middle Byzantine ivory to have been preserved (Fig. 2).³⁰ Its bearer was Fra Elias de Coppis, second general of the Franciscan order, who, in 1245 or 1246, built the church of San Francesco in Cortona to house the cross-reliquary. Far from being plunder, this magnificent piece should be understood as an instrument in the negotiations between the emperor-in-exile and the papacy. The 1230s and 1240s saw a concerted effort, first by Gregory IX³¹ and, after 1243, Innocent IV,³² to bring an end to the schism, in return for which Constantinople would be restored to the Orthodox. These transactions were carried out primarily by the Franciscans.³³ Elias himself was the emissary of Frederick II Hohenstauffen, who had his own antipapal reasons to deliberate with Nicaea, offering his daughter to John, who was threatening the Constantinople of Baldwin II, in return for a one-year truce. The friar seems to have been a double agent, or at least astute enough to benefit from all three interested parties. Whatever his role, there is no doubt that the staurothèque's survival to this day is due to his skills as a negotiator.

Reason exists to believe that ivory was a favored medium of diplomatic inducement. Whether or not Innocent IV knew of the precious baggage that Elias brought back, this pope—Count Sinisbaldo Fieschi before his election—was the likely recipient of the only other extant Byzantine ivory whose arrival in thirteenth-century Italy seems assured. The celebrated box containing a fragment of the True Cross, known as the Fieschi-Morgan reliquary and now in the Metropolitan Museum, was bought by J. P. Morgan from the collection of Baron Albert Oppenheim who, in turn, had acquired it from the

²⁸Thus Dandolo (*Chronica*, 297), on the headless body of Paul the Hermit, which "Emanuel imperator Constantinopolitanus in monasterio [*sic*] sancte Marie Parvulepti [*scil.* Peribleptos] ab eo constructo deposuerat," which was sent to Venice by Jacopo Lanzolo in 1239–40.

²⁹On the body of St. Theodore, conveyed to the church of San Salvatore by the Venetian Marco Dauro some time after the capture of Bulgarian Mesembria in 1257, see *ibid.*, 328, lines 30–33. The business of translation continued apace in the 14th century. It could even be provoked by Byzantine military activity. Thus the staurothèque known as the Zaccaria cross in Genoa (Frolow, *La relique*, no. 556) was presented to that city's cathedral by Ticino Zaccaria in 1336. Not recorded in *PLP*, the donor was presumably related to the Genoese lords of Phokaia, which fell to Andronikos III and his Turkish allies in 1336. In Venice, again, the inventory of San Giorgio Maggiore, dated 16 January 1362, records the possession of, *inter alia*, "20 pieces" (*petia XX*) of Sts. Cosmas and Damian and five bones of Sts. Pantaleon and Barbara (P. G. Molmenti, *La storia di Venezia nella vita privata*, 2nd ed. [Turin, 1880], 530). Their source is not indicated.

³⁰A. Goldschmidt and K. Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.-XIII. Jahrhunderts*, II (Berlin, 1934), no. 77; Cutler, *Hand of the Master* (note 2 above), 20–21, 36–37, 140. A plaque in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, II, no. 23) is 1 cm taller, but the Cortona reliquary is, in area, considerably larger; it is unique in that it is richly carved on both sides. For the scholarly study of the inscription on its reverse, see p. 258 below.

³¹P. Žavoronkov, "Nikejskaja imperija i Zapad," *Viz Vrem* 36 (1974), 100–121, esp. 113–16.

³²W. von Vries, "Innocenz IV. (1243–1254) und der christlichen Osten," *Ostkirchliche Studien* 12 (1963), 113–31. Neither Vries nor Žavoronkov, "Nikejskaja imperija," mentions the ivory.

³³M. Roncaglia, *Les frères mineurs et l'Église grecque orthodoxe au XIIIe siècle (1231–1274)* (Cairo, 1954), 85–86.

Fieschi family. The catalogue of Oppenheim's collection records that the enameled reliquary was contained in the casket³⁴ that Morgan eventually gave to the museum in New York (Fig. 3). John III Vatatzes was eager to reach an agreement with Innocent IV in the hope of obtaining papal assistance against the Latin emperors in Constantinople.³⁵ These negotiations ended with the death of both John and the pope in 1254. Before this date the latter had apparently sent to the West more than one particle of the cross housed in a splendid receptacle.

The custom of setting caskets within caskets, each of a precious but different substance, seems to have been a practice of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The inventory drawn up in September 1325 for the treasury of San Marco in Venice records a box of gold, inside which was a box of crystal with a gold lid and containing the blood of Christ, the whole set in turn enclosed in a *busolo di lefanto*.³⁶ Whether this outermost container was carved, as was the Metropolitan's Deesis and Apostles casket, we have no way of telling. But, beyond the minimal number of Byzantine ivories that are known to have been in Italian collections in this period, it is worth observing that this material arrived in the form of receptacles for relics. As much is true of France and Flanders, where the number of ivories, attested or arguably appearing at this time,³⁷ is even smaller. This would seem to be the case with the Troyes casket,³⁸ whose imperial and even oriental subject matter was no impediment to its use as a Christian container. On the other hand, the absence of newly arrived ivory icons³⁹ is remarkable, and this lacuna makes all the more questionable the argument that attributes to such hypothetical pieces a formative influence on Gothic sculpture. Particularly risky are connections such as that drawn be-

³⁴E. Molinier, *Collection du Baron Albert Oppenheim: tableaux et objets d'art* (Paris, 1904), no. 64. Frolov, *La relique*, no. 1623, asserted without argument that the ivory was a Western creation of the 10th or 11th century. On both technical and epigraphic grounds this is an untenable position. See Cutler, *Hand of the Master* (note 2 above), 62.

³⁵Vries "Innocenz IV."

³⁶Gallo, *Tesoro* (note 6 above), 276, no. 7.

³⁷It is conceivable that the "Harbaville" triptych (D. Gaborit-Chopin in *Byzance: l'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises*, ed. J. Durand [Paris, 1992], no. 149), discovered in the region of Arras at the beginning of the 19th century, and the Crucifixion set in a book cover and surrounded by Mosan champlevé enamels (Durand in *ibid.*, no. 165) were also early arrivals. C. de Linas (in *RArtChr* 3 [1885]) regarded the direct transmission of the triptych from Constantinople to French Flanders as "une probabilité voisine de la certitude."

³⁸Durand, *Byzance*, no. 168. The casket almost certainly reached Troyes, together with other containers and relics, shortly after 1205 in the baggage of Jean Langlois, the chaplain of Garnier de Trainel, the bishop of Troyes who was the crusaders' *procurator sanctorum reliquorum* in Constantinople. On the relics, see Frolov, *La relique*, nos. 228, 465 (and cf. nos. 1026, 1034), and, on the persons involved, *ActaSS*, June, V (1867), 640. On an ivory box containing a golden reliquary, said to have been brought from Constantinople to the abbey of Mont St.-Martin by the crusader Baudouin de Beauvoir, see Riant, *Exuviae* (note 16), I, clxxvii-clxxviii.

³⁹Almost all the well-known icons incorporated into German book covers (see note 2 above) are much earlier, and usually Ottonian, settings. Among icons in other materials that, for one reason or another, failed to arrive in the West, one should remember the *κατόχρυσα εικονίσματα* sent by Michael VIII to Pope Gregory X on the occasion of the Council of Lyon (1274). According to Pachymeres (*Relations historiques*, ed. A. Failler, CFHB 24 [Paris, 1984], II, 493.6–11), these, together with incense and an *ἐνδυτή*, originally given by the emperor to the Great Church, were lost at sea. However, I. Veloudos (*Ἑλλήνων ὀρθοδόξων ἀποίκια ἐν Βερεντίᾳ*, 2nd ed. [Venice, 1893], 42) suggested that the icons were brought to Venice by Gabriel Severos, metropolitan of Philadelphia in Lydia, in 1577. Severos certainly brought Greek books: for these and the circumstances of their arrival, see S. P. Madigan, "Gabriel Severos's Private Library," *Studi Veneziani*, n.s., 20 (1990), 255–57.

tween the Christ fragment on the cover of the Codex Ebnerianus in Oxford (Fig. 4) and a St. Peter on an early-thirteenth-century portal in Paris (Fig. 5).⁴⁰ The ivory is never known to have been in France and was imposed on a manuscript, first reported in 1738, brought “from the East” by an inhabitant of Nuremburg.⁴¹ Here the notion of a relationship is sustainable on neither stylistic nor iconographic grounds, but the greater danger lies in the method of argumentation: it is simply not demonstrable that “ivories of this [i.e., the Macedonian] period were, of course, especially frequent in the West after the fall and sacking of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204.”⁴² Of course, boxes like the Veroli casket⁴³ may long have lain in church treasuries unnoticed save in their capacity as containers for relics. But this very possibility reinforces our point. An object disregarded is an object that is not important. An unimportant object evokes no response; it is, in all senses of the term, insignificant.

The absence of Italian artistic attention has been better understood with respect to Byzantine objects in media other than ivory that can be shown to have arrived in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Of a group of relics and reliquaries that reached Siena in 1359,⁴⁴ it has rightly been observed that “by the 1360’s interest on the part of Sienese artists in Byzantine art had largely disappeared. . . . For all the visual impact that they made, they might have never left Pera.”⁴⁵ In contrast to this lack of concern at the receiving end, it is clear from the contracts devoted to this transfer that the relics and their containers were objects of considerable interest at their point of transmission in Constantinople. For once we have documents sufficient to the task of demonstrating that, instead of loot, we have here a huge group of treasures from the imperial collection that entered the market as the result of economic forces. The “imperatrix uxor Cathecuzinos,” i.e., Irene Asan, the wife of John VI, testified before the Dominican *inquisitor* for the Latin colonies that they came “de domo imperiali,” that the palace had no relics as precious as these, and that they were put on sale in the Loggia Venetorum “pro necessi-

⁴⁰W. Sauerländer, “Die kunstgeschichtliche Stellung der Westportale von Notre-Dame in Paris,” *MarbJb* 17 (1959), 24–25, seconded by O. Demus, *Byzantine Art and the West* (New York, 1970), 179. By contrast, E. Kitzinger, “The Byzantine Contribution to Western Art of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries,” *DOP* 20 (1960), 41–43, suggested that the exemplars used by artists such as Nicholas of Verdun “and the great masters of northern France” were more likely of Roman or early Christian manufacture. The point is conceded by Demus (p. 185). In my view, the question of the “influence” of Byzantine art on that of the late medieval West was never better answered than by Charles Bayet over a century ago: “Il faut renoncer à en voir partout les vestiges et nous ne lui devons ni l’art gothique ni l’art florentin, tels qu’ils se développèrent dans toute leur beauté” (*L’art byzantin*, 3rd ed. [Paris, 1904], 318).

⁴¹Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Elfenbeinskulpturen*, II, no. 62.

⁴²Demus, *Byzantine Art*, 180.

⁴³Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Elfenbeinskulpturen*, I, no. 21. Such delayed recognition is no less true of late antique objects. The Asclepius-Hygieia diptych, long thought to have been first noticed in the mid-18th century by Antonio Francesco Gori (note 49 below) has been recently shown to have been in the Gaddi collection in Florence ca. 1500. See M. Gibson, *The Liverpool Ivories: Late Antique and Medieval Ivory and Bone Carving in Liverpool Museum and the Walker Art Gallery* (London, 1994), nos. 5–6 and pl. vib.

⁴⁴G. Derenzini, “Esame paleografico del Codice X.IV.1 della Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati e contributo documentale alla storia del ‘Tesoro’ dello Spedale di Santa Maria della Scala,” *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell’Università di Siena* 8 (1987), 41–76. On these objects, see further Nelson, “Italian Appreciation and Appropriation,” 215, who kindly drew my attention to this fundamental scrutiny.

⁴⁵P. Hetherington, “A Purchase of Byzantine Relics and Reliquaries in Fourteenth-Century Venice,” *ArtV* 37 (1983), 23.

tate.”⁴⁶ The statement that the relics had belonged “*imperatoribus tempore lapso*” is due to the bishops who took the deposition rather than to the empress but, in light of the claims asserted for them, appears credible. They included an image (*ancona*) of Constantine the Great, the wood of the True Cross that he had sought out, the rope with which Christ expelled the traders from the Temple, hairs from his head, the garments in which he went to his end, and the lance and sponge of the Crucifixion. Together with a lectionary in a sumptuous enameled cover and the remains of thirty-three specified saints, they were evaluated at 3,000 florins.⁴⁷

Although this catalogue is unusually detailed, it is perhaps of lesser interest than the details in the documents concerning Pietro di Giunta Torrigiani of Signa (a village to the west of Florence), the man who acquired these artifacts. Described as “*habitans Costantinopoli et civis Venetus*,” he must long have been a resident of the Byzantine capital, for both his first wife, Joanna, and his second, Luchina, are variously described as daughters of men of Pera or as themselves inhabitants of that quarter. Torrigiani bought the relics before the emperor retired into a monastery in 1354,⁴⁸ but five years were to elapse before he concluded in Venice the arrangement whereby, in return for their conveyance to the Ospedale di Santa Maria della Scala in Siena, he, Luchina, and his son by his first marriage would receive a living of 200 florins a year and the use of a house belonging to the hospital.

It is conceivable that during the long interval between the acquisition and the arrival of the relics in Siena Torrigiani was prevented from concluding the deal by business in Constantinople. No less possible is his search for a worthy institution (an inhabitant of Signa would presumably think first of an establishment in Florence) or one from which he could secure the most favorable terms. Be that as it may, the result is so similar to another, made forty-five years later and again involving a Byzantine object, that we seem to be faced with a standard arrangement in fourteenth-century Italy. Our source for the later deal is the eighteenth-century scholar Antonio Francesco Gori, whose posthumous *Thesaurus veterum diptychorum consularium et ecclesiasticorum*⁴⁹ will be of concern to us later. Gori’s version, which has been followed by all later scholars, poses some problems. But since, in the main, the account is plausible, and especially since it concerns a well-known icon, it must remain the prime source until it proves possible to pursue the matter in the Florentine archives. The icon in question is the miniature mosaic diptych of the Twelve Feasts, now in the Museo dell’Opera del Duomo and reportedly given in 1394, together with a group of relics of “saints of the Eastern church,” to the baptistery of the basilica of St. John the Baptist in Florence (Fig. 6).⁵⁰ The donor was Nicoletta da Grioni, a “Venetian matron . . . who came to Florence on account of her devout soul.” She was, then, like Torrigiani, an outsider and similarly made this settlement late in life. This can be deduced from Gori’s information that Grioni remained long unwed, before marrying an unnamed Venetian who was already dead by the time she went to Florence. There she

⁴⁶ Derenzini, “Esame paleografico,” 69.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 63.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 75.

⁴⁹ A. F. Gori, *Thesaurus veterum diptychorum consularium et ecclesiasticorum*, 3 vols. (Florence, 1759). The mosaic icon in question is treated in III, 320–27.

⁵⁰ Furlan, *Icone bizantine* (note 23 above), no. 30.

entered into an agreement with the consuls of the Arte di Calimala, the wool guild whose members had in their care old buildings of the city, including the baptistry. In return for her oblation, she would receive until her death (which occurred in Florence in 1409) an annual pension of 51 florins.

This much about the last stage of the mosaic's provenance seems assured. But its earlier history is clouded by Gori's assertion that Grioni's husband had been a "cubicularius" of John Kantakouzenos who, when he was "hurled from the throne of imperial rank," took the "tablets" from the palace chapel and bestowed them on his aide. Neither the icon's style nor its prefabricated frame⁵¹ argues against its creation in the first third of the fourteenth century, the date normally assigned, but the rank of *koubikoularios* is an anachronism that suggests a dependence on non-Byzantine sources.⁵² Nonetheless, there is nothing inherently improbable in the notion of a late Byzantine emperor's gift to a faithful servitor: long tradition, if not documentary proof, maintains as much of the Volto Santo, the mandylion icon housed in an elaborately enameled silver-filigree cover, given by John V Palaiologos to his *capitano* (and later doge of Genoa) Leonardo Montaldo.⁵³

The practice whereby Italian owners conveyed to ecclesiastical institutions presents that they had received from Byzantium suggests that not all the objects recorded in fourteenth-century church treasuries were items that had been looted. This surmise is borne out by the chronological data attached to many acquisitions. At least twelve items in the treasury of San Marco—including the above-mentioned votive crown, the well-known glass bowl with "mythological" scenes, and the two famous icons of St. Michael⁵⁴—appear for the first time in the inventory of 1325 rather than that of 1283, the time by which most of the plunder of Constantinople had been accomplished. Only rarely is a Byzantine origin implied, as when the language of a lectionary's text or the style in which a silver cross is worked is indicated, but it is noteworthy that the number of such accessions continued to grow in and after the course of the quattrocento.⁵⁵ In those rare cases where internal evidence or external documentation allows a fuller understanding of an object's origin than a mere inventory entry does, these point—even in regard to earlier arrivals in the West—not to loot but to situations in which diplomatic or commercial norms prevailed. Thus, among the many altar silks called *pannum* or *panno* in the treasury lists, one inscribed with the name of "the despotes Constantine, descendant of the Komnenoi, sebastokrator of the family of the Angeloi, scion of the race of the king of the

⁵¹A. Grabar, *Les revêtements en or et en argent des icônes byzantines au moyen-âge* (Venice, 1975), 60.

⁵²The term seems to have disappeared from use in the second half of the 11th century. See N. Oikonomidès, *Les listes de présence byzantines du IXe et Xe siècle* (Paris, 1972), 301. Lacking the name of the individual who is said to have received the mosaic, we are unable to identify candidates in either the primary sources or the secondary literature on the reign of John VI.

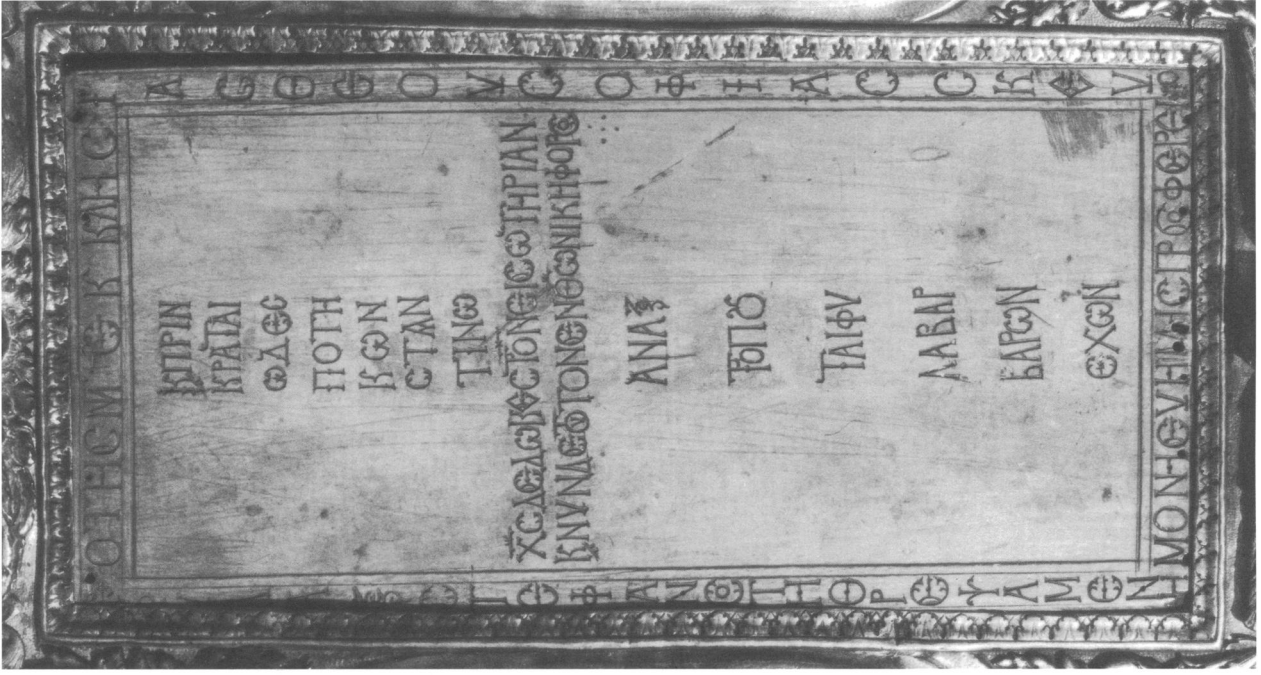
⁵³C. Bertelli in *Splendori di Bisanzio: Testimonianze e riflessi d'arte e cultura bizantine nelle chiese d'Italia*, ed. G. Morello (Milan, 1990), no. 46. C. Dufour-Bozzo, *Il Sacro Volto di Genova* (Rome, 1974), 64–65, concluded that John V Palaiologos' "gift" to Montaldo is a legend of early-16th-century invention and that the icon, spirited out of Constantinople by an unknown hand, was in Genoa before 1388 and possibly shortly after 1362. The gift to Montaldo is accepted by H. Belting, *Bild und Kult: eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst* (Munich, 1990), 235, 373, together with a valuable discussion of the image's relatives, ancient and modern. On the Virgin icon in Freising, which arrived in Italy under similar circumstances, see p. 253 below.

⁵⁴Gallo, *Tesoro* (note 6 above), 276, no. 1; 278, no. 21; 278, nos. 7–8.

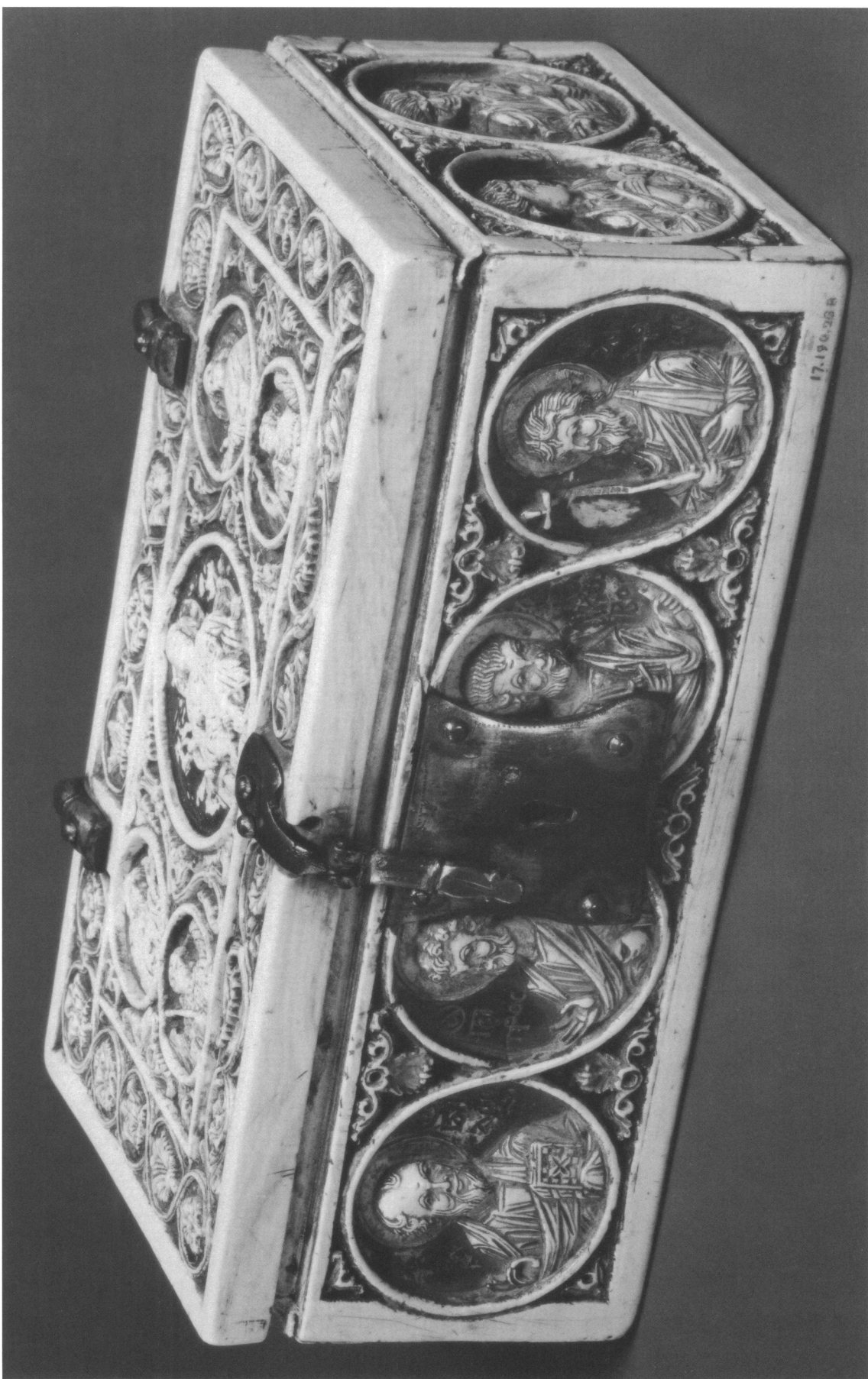
⁵⁵Thus in the inventory of 1524; *ibid.*, 291, nos. 15, 22; 292, no. 49.



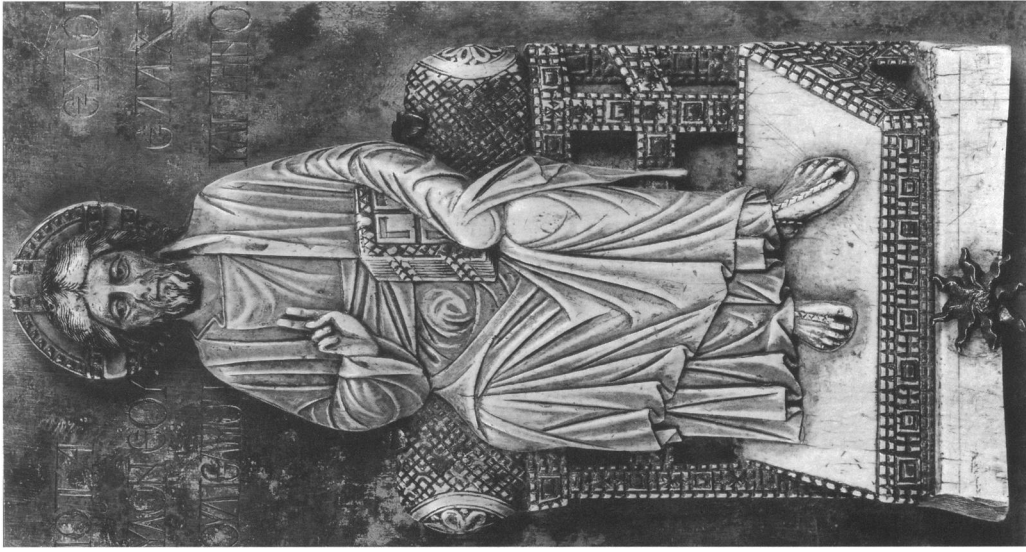
1 "Grotto of the Virgin." Venice, Treasury of San Marco
(photo: Osvaldo Böhm, Venice)



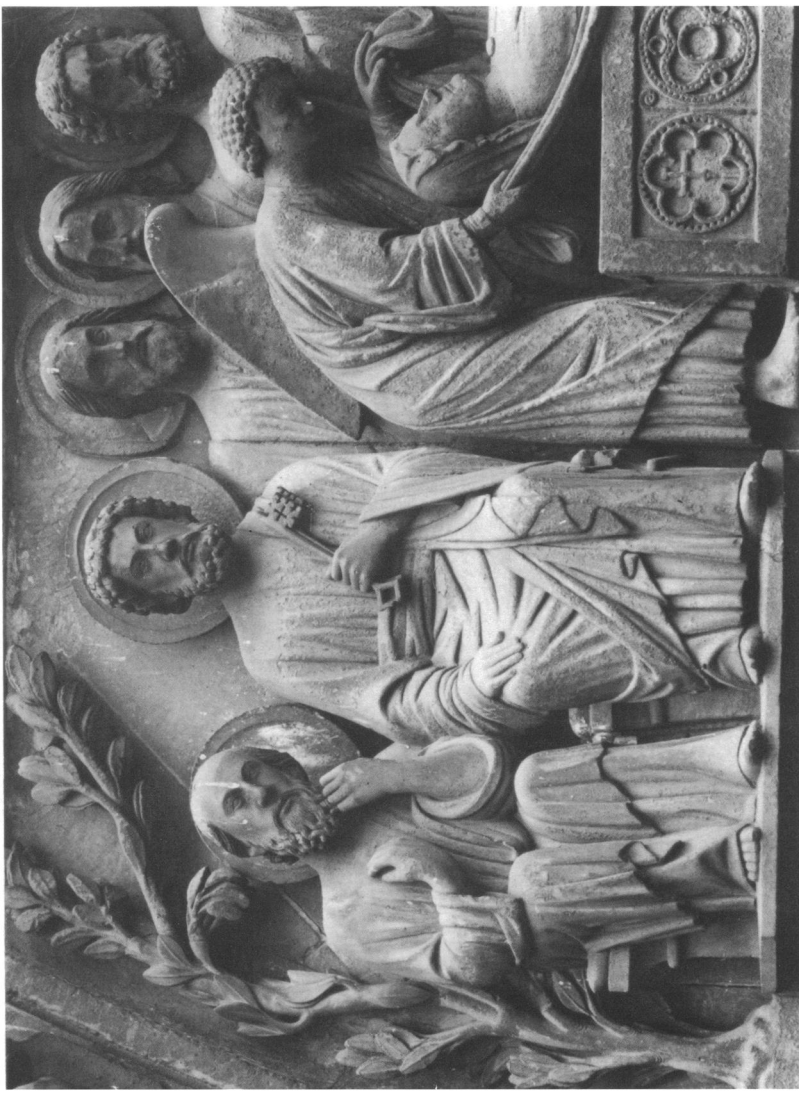
2 Reliquary of the True Cross. Cortona, San Francesco: (a) front (b) reverse



3 Casket with Deesis and Apostles. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art



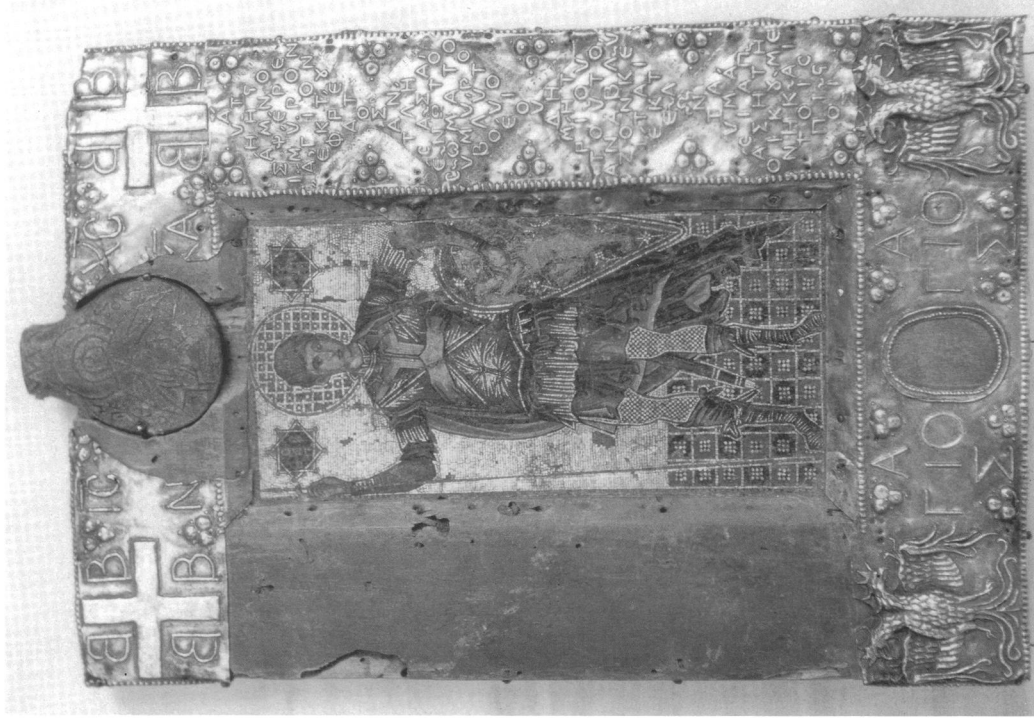
4 Codex Ebnerianus, front cover.
Oxford, Bodleian Library



5 Saints Paul and Peter. Paris, Notre-Dame, west portal



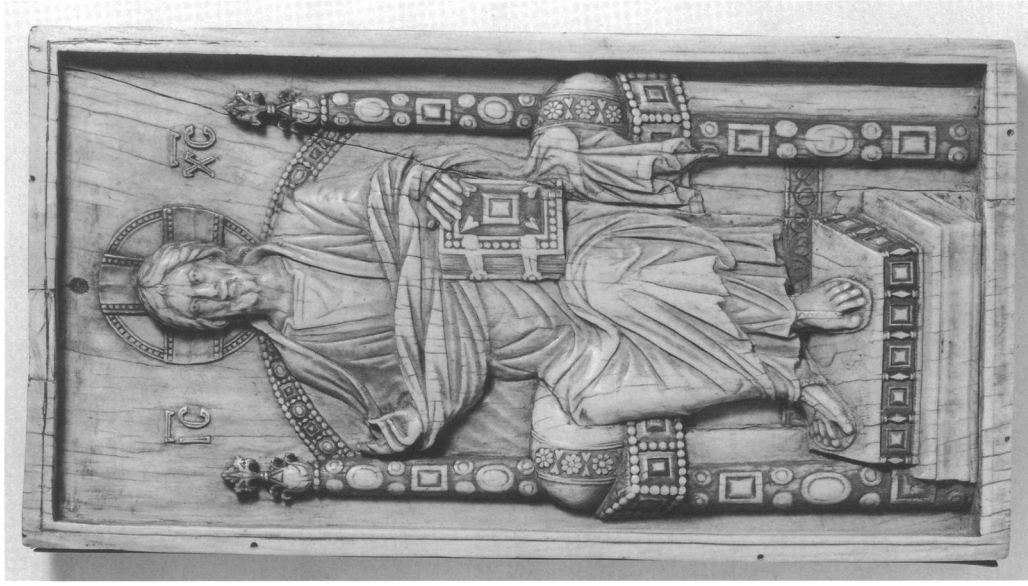
6 Icon of the Twelve Feasts, Florence, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo



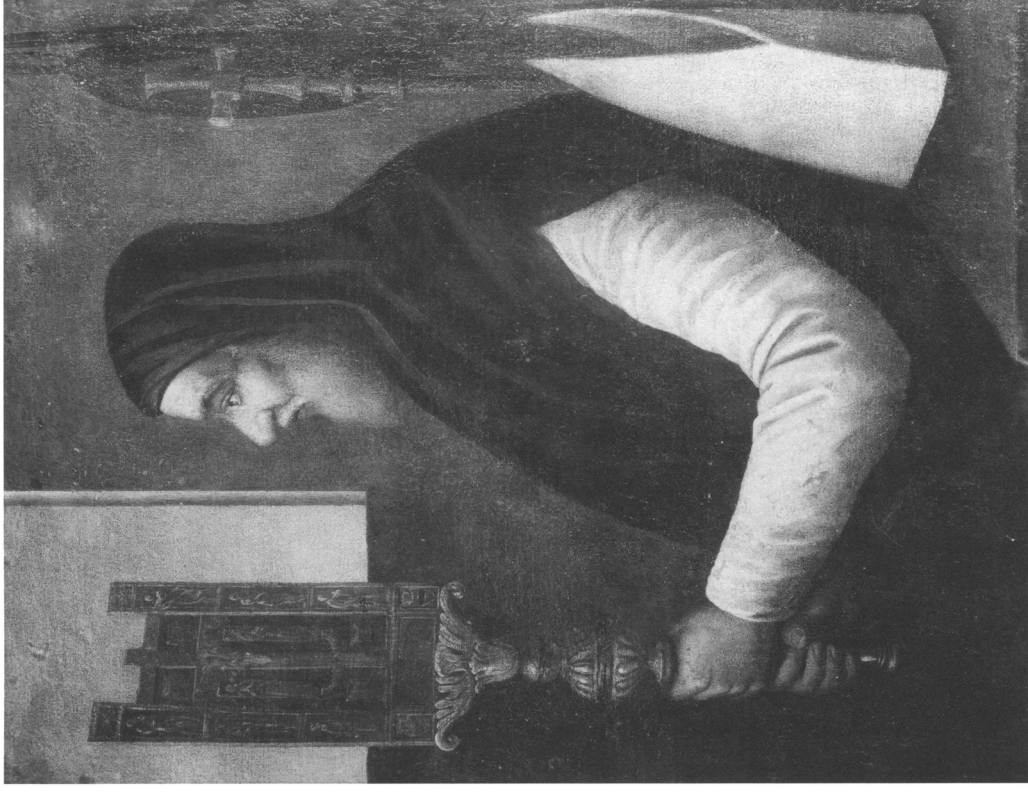
7 St. Denetrios. Sassoferrato, Musco Civico
(photo: Comune di Sassoferrato)



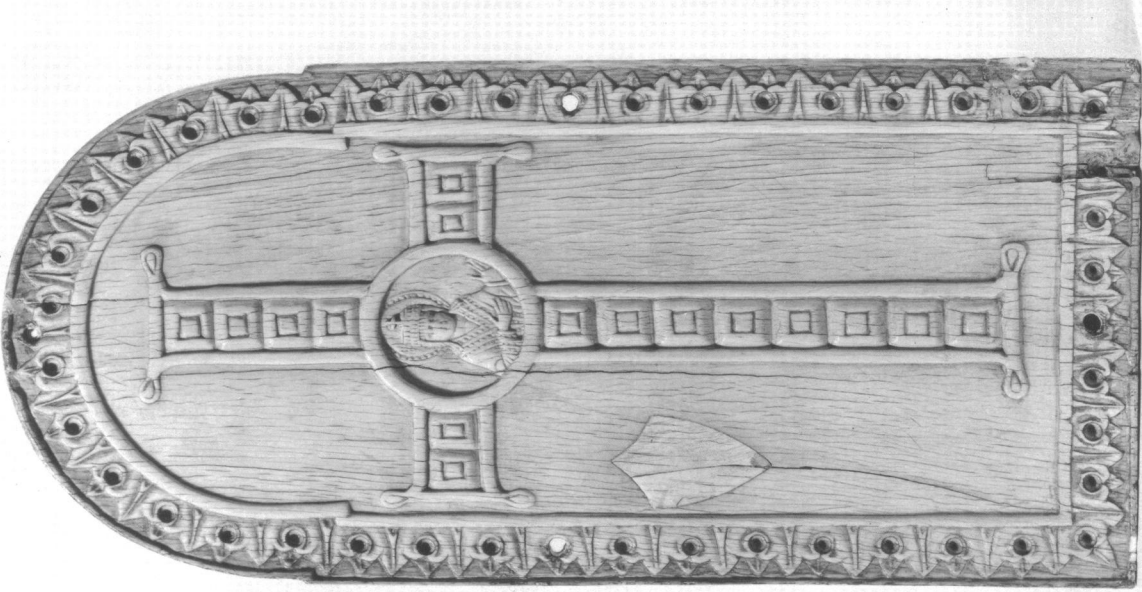
8 Palaiologan pyxis (photo: Dumbarton Oaks)



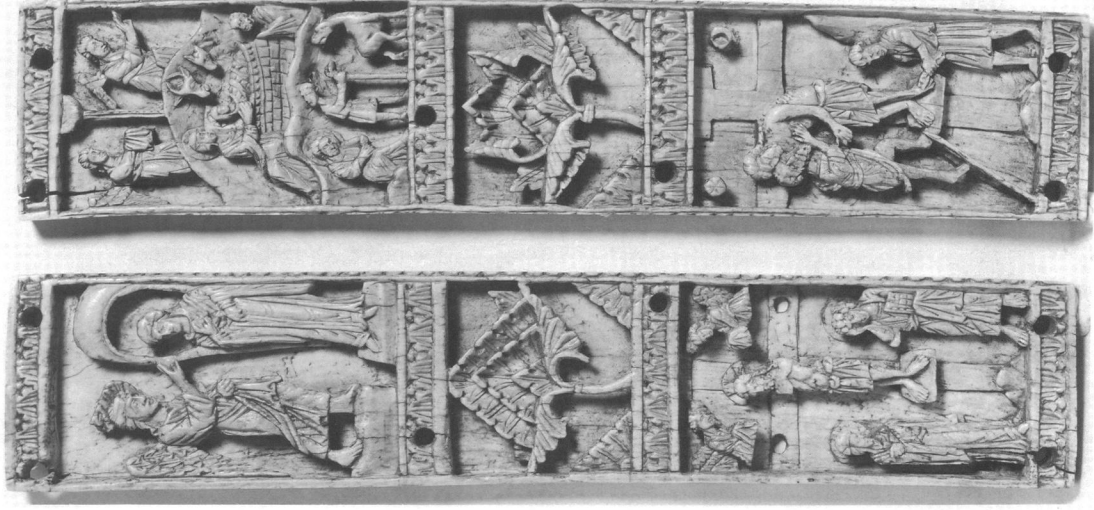
9 Enthroned Christ. Switzerland, private collection



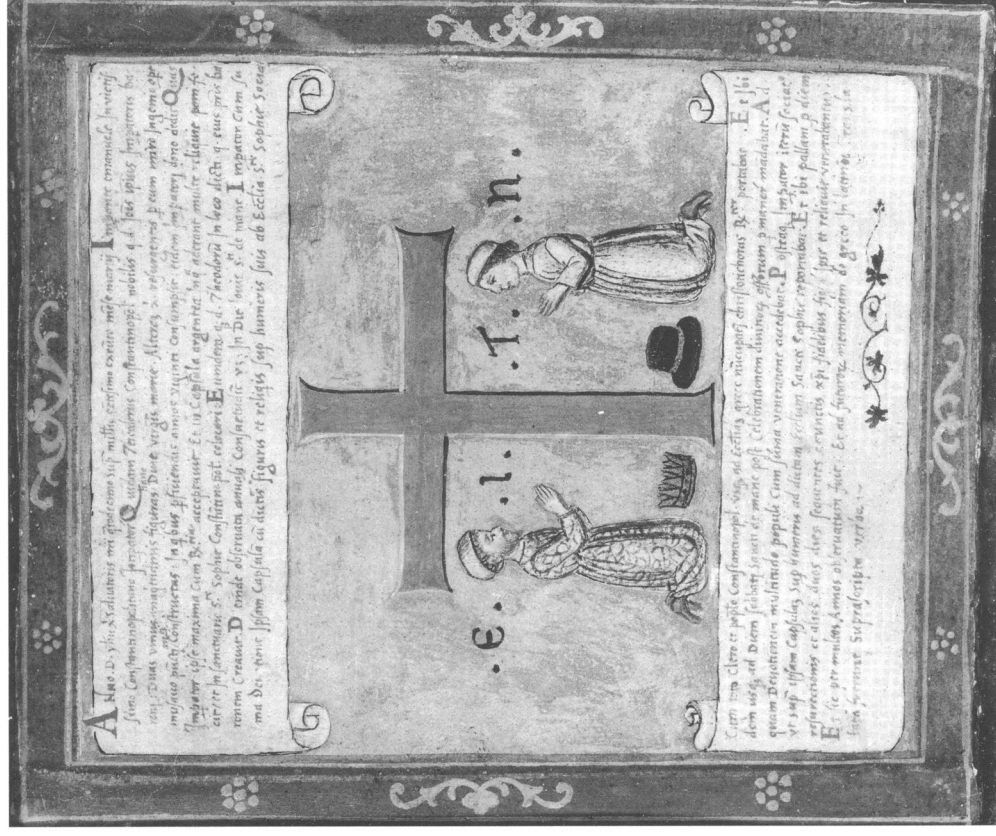
10 Cardinal Bessarion with his reliquary, G. Previtali (?).
Vénice, Biblioteca Marciana (photo: Osváldo Böhm, Venice)



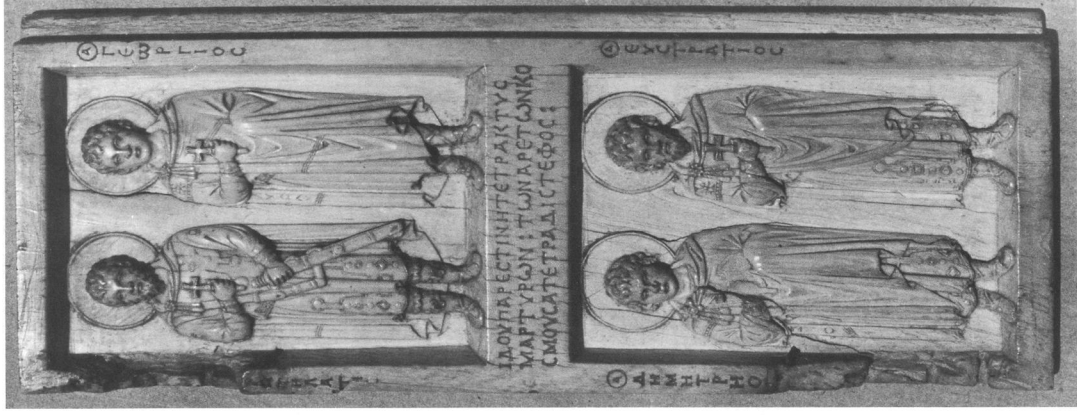
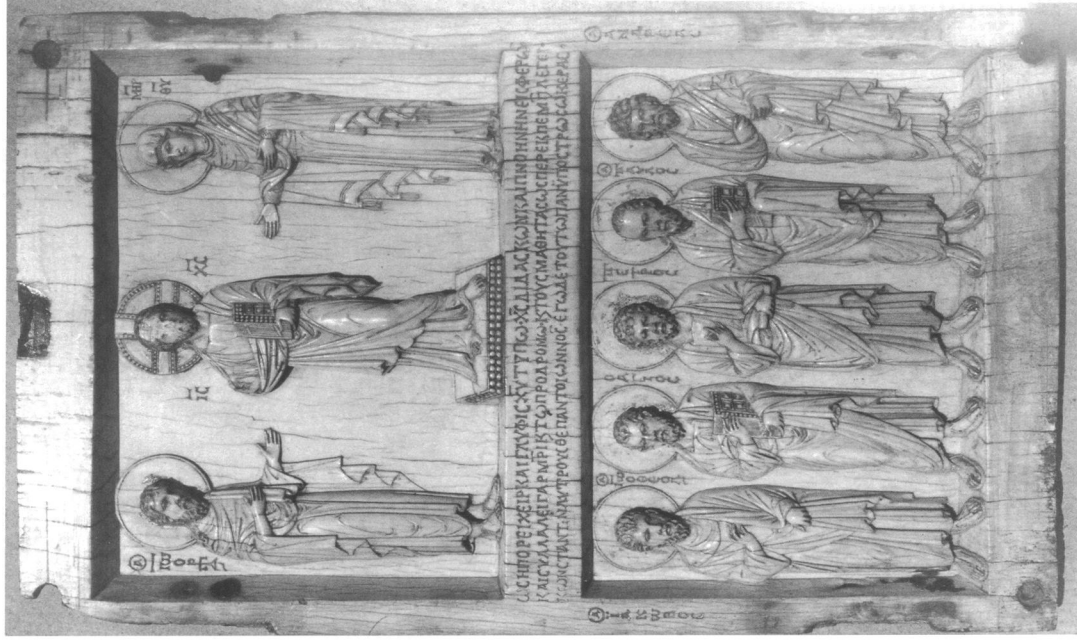
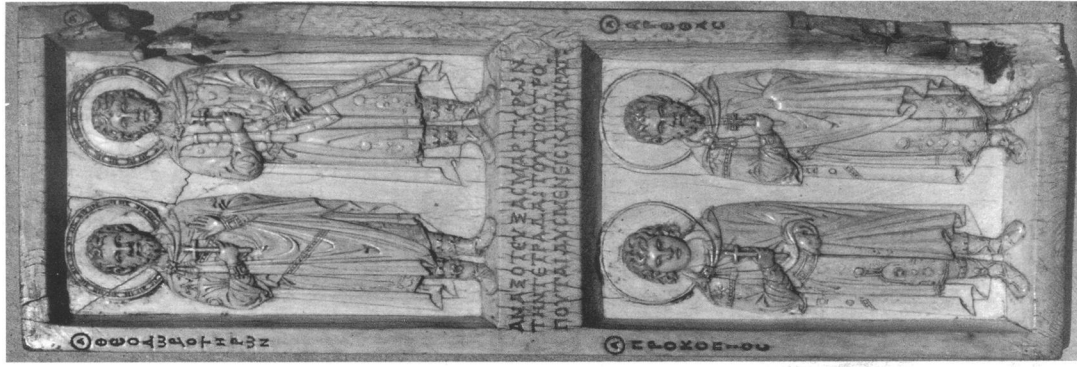
11 Diptych leaf (photo: Dumbarton Oaks)



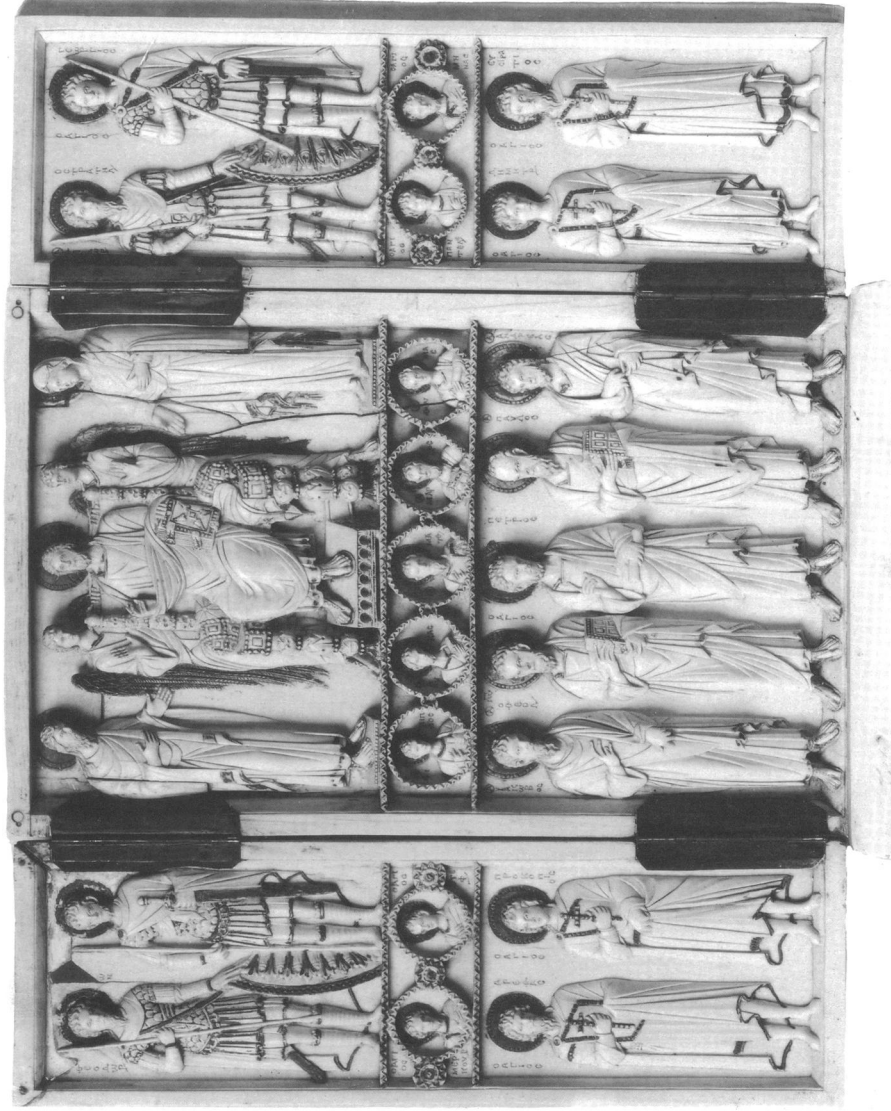
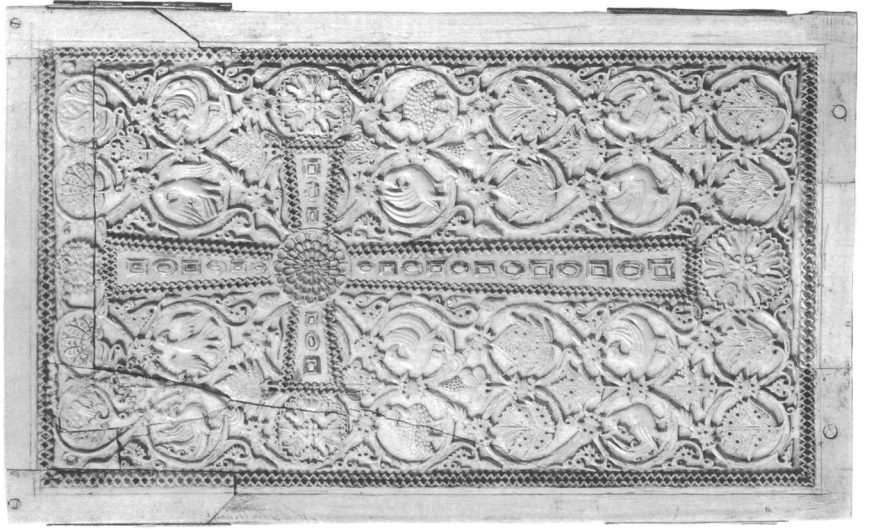
12 Triptych wings. Pesaro, Museo Archeologico
Oliveriano



13 Virgin Eleousa. Venice, Santa Maria della Salute: (a) front (b) reverse (photo: Osvaldo Böhm, Venice)



14 Triptych. Rome, Palazzo Venezia



15 Triptych. Vatican, Musco Sacro: (a) front (b) reverse

Ausoni” can be associated with the foreign policy of Michael I Komnenos Doukas of Epiros. Maria Theocharis showed that the Constantine in question was Michael’s son and was able to connect this gift with a *promissio* drawn up in June 1210 between the doge, Pietro Zian, and the Epirote ruler.⁵⁶ Later in the same century Michael VIII Palaiologos sent to his Genoese allies two silken *pallia*, one of which survives.⁵⁷ This was obviously made ad hoc: The central scene shows Michael accompanied by his eponymous archangel, Pope Gregory X, and St. Lawrence to Lawrence’s church in Genoa. The emperor was tactful enough to have himself identified as “imp(er)atorem Greco(rum)” rather than as emperor of the Romans, and proud enough of his offering to have it commemorated by Manuel Holobolos.⁵⁸

Where the origin of less august artifacts is not recorded, we may be entitled to regard them as booty. It is at least arguable that a now missing ivory of the Deesis, which appears in 1466 in the inventory of the cathedral of Vich (Catalonia),⁵⁹ was an object looted by one of the Catalan mercenaries hired by Andronikos II to fight the Turks in Asia Minor. It is no less likely that some objects arriving in the West as items of commerce were, at an earlier stage, plundered. It would be absurd to attribute to the crusaders or their successors a purely pious interest in plunder: stolen goods are no less desirable when they possess commercial value. In this vein we hear, for example, of thirty-nine columns and other marbles—*spolia* ready for export—offered in 1291 as collateral on a mortgage by a Venetian borrower in Korone.⁶⁰ Whatever the motives that turned huge amounts of prefabricated building material into commodities, it is scarcely surprising that Greek books—portable, indispensable for their texts, attractive when they were illustrated, and redolent with the still powerful mystique of the New Rome—should also be regarded in this way. By the middle of the fifteenth century such a book market was already in existence in Venice.⁶¹ But the literary lust of Italians is apparent even earlier when, sometime between 1360 and 1389, the Genoese jurist Bartolomeo di Jacopo, who was a friend of

⁵⁶In Hahnloser, *Tesoro* (note 3 above), no. 115. See also Theocharis in *BZ*, 56 (1963), 273–83. By this agreement Michael, who was murdered in 1215, pledged himself and his successors to send each year one *panno* woven in gold for the altar of San Marco and another to the doge and his successors. For two similar, slightly earlier agreements (both of 1209) in which Latin magnates in Greece promised to send silks woven in gold each year to San Marco and to the doge, see D. Jacoby, “Silk in Western Byzantium,” *BZ* 84–85 (1991–92), 469.

⁵⁷P. Schreiner, “Zwei Denkmäler aus der frühen Paläologenzeit: ein Bildnis Michaels VIII. und der Genueser Pallio” in *Festschrift für Klaus Wessel zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. M. Restle (Munich, 1988), 249–58. Schreiner (p. 255) connects another *pallium*—formerly in the treasury of St. Peter’s in Rome and depicting Michael VIII led by Pope Gregory X to that church—with the Unionist negotiations of 1274.

⁵⁸Michael’s *grammatikos*, however, understandably omitted from his *ekphrasis* the scene in which the emperor is led into the Latin church by the pope. On Holobolos, the several *peploi* involved and their historical context, see R. Macrides, “The New Constantine and the New Constantinople—1261?” *BMGS* 6 (1980), 33–36.

⁵⁹Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Elfenbeinskulpturen* (note 30 above), II, no. 69. On the origin of this plaque and a mosaic icon of St. Nicholas, both stolen from Vich in 1903, see A. Muñoz in *BZ* 14 (1905), 575–77. Here Muñoz contests the argument that the two objects were brought from Rome by Cosimo de Monserrat, confessor and chancellor of the Spanish pope Calixtus III.

⁶⁰A. E. Laiou, “Venice as a Centre of Trade and of Artistic Production in the Thirteenth Century,” in *Il Medio Oriente e l’Occidente nell’arte del XIII secolo*, ed. H. Belting (Bologna, 1982), 15–16.

⁶¹N. G. Wilson, “The Book Trade in Venice ca. 1400–1415,” in *Venezia, Centro di mediazione tra Oriente e Occidente (secoli XV–XVI): Aspetti e problemi*, II (Florence, 1977), 381–97.

Petrarch and Coluccio Salutati, acquired the Menologion of Basil II (Vat. gr. 1613).⁶² This well-traveled diplomat could have found the manuscript on any one of his tours of duty. He represented his city in France and Spain as well as in Florence and Milan. But given the minimal east-west trade in books before the period of his activity,⁶³ the most likely point of acquisition is Caffa, where there were Greek churches and monasteries,⁶⁴ and where Bartolomeo served as consul in 1365. I presume that he brought the manuscript back with him, an early exponent of the westward flow of books that by 1500 would be in full spate. The best example of this commerce is one that has been surprisingly overlooked since its discovery more than a century ago.⁶⁵ The so-called Anonimo Morelliano records the presence in the library of Leonico Tomeo, professor of rhetoric at Padua from 1497, of the Joshua Roll (Vat. Palat. gr. 431). This same “phylosopho” possessed ancient sculptures in bronze and marble, a painting by “John of Bruges,” and a portrait of his father by Jacopo Bellini and of himself as a youth by Giovanni Bellini.⁶⁶ He was evidently what is today called a collector; equally evident is that a new era had begun in the means and purposes of the acquisition of Byzantine objects.

2. THE TRAPPINGS OF SPLENDOR

Begun shortly before 1520 and added to until at least 1543, the Anonimo Morelliano makes little pretense to be more than a list of notices of works of art in northern Italian cities. Invaluable as this documentation is, it indiscriminately catalogues objects in private, civic, and ecclesiastical collections. This very breadth, of course, sets it apart from the chronicles and inventories that we have till now considered. Characteristic of its period, it is much concerned with attributions to individual artists and, often sagaciously, with the provenance of older works.⁶⁷ Sacred and profane pieces are treated evenhandedly. Thus no different standards are applied to the illustrated late antique Virgil manuscript, the Carolingian Terence—both now in the Vatican Library (lat. 3225, 3868) and then in the possession of Pietro Bembo⁶⁸—and “un quadretto della passion del nostro signore” given by the “Nicene cardinal” to the Scuola della Carità in Venice. This gift will be of concern to us later, but for now it is of interest that the author offers an explanation for the offering: Bessarion wished to join this community and therefore on the back of the picture had himself portrayed, cross in hand, “with two other brothers likewise on their knees.”⁶⁹ The attribution of a motive other than piety, like the very diversity of the

⁶²L. Ventura, “A proposito delle trasmigrazioni del *Menologio di Basilio II* (codice Vaticano greco 1613),” *Accademie e Biblioteche d'Italia* 55 (1989), 35–39. I am grateful to Linda Safran for this reference.

⁶³See Nelson, “Italian Appreciation and Appropriation.”

⁶⁴G. Petti Balbi, “Caffa e Pera a metà del Trecento,” *RESEE* 16 (1978), 217–28.

⁶⁵Th. Frimmel in *Chronique des arts* 29 (1887), 228; idem, *Der Anonimo Morelliano* (*Marcanton Michiel's Notizie d'opere del disegno*) (Vienna, 1888), 18. These notices are ignored in the modern literature on the MS. On Tomeo himself, see N. G. Wilson, *From Byzantium to Italy: Greek Studies in the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore, 1992), 116, 182 n. 7.

⁶⁶Frimmel, *Anonimo Morelliano*, 16–18.

⁶⁷Thus (ibid., 16–18) the Joshua Roll is described as “opera costantinopolitana, dipinta già 500 anni.”

⁶⁸Ibid., 24.

⁶⁹Ibid., 116–18. None of the preserved documents discussed below preserves any trace of such an image.

pieces that the Anonimo thought worth recording, betrays a novel, thoroughly unmedieval attitude toward acts of possession and oblation.

The new role played by acts of this sort in the mentality of the Italian Renaissance has been cogently analyzed only very recently.⁷⁰ It has little to do with the long and erroneously supposed preference for secular objects and even less with their raw economic value. Both frames of reference are readily apparent in medieval documents. The inventory of the papal treasure in Avignon in 1353 makes much, for example, of a plate with the image of the emperor Constantine on horseback, noting the exact weight of this silver vessel.⁷¹ The document's successors between 1360 and 1376 relate that other pieces, for both liturgical and domestic use, came "de thesauro imperatoris Constantinopolitani," and supply the weight of the treasure as a whole.⁷² Rather, as the Venetian Sabba da Castiglione wrote, "musical instruments, sculpture, antiquities, medals, engravings, pictures, wall hangings all testify to the intelligence, civility, and manners of the owner."⁷³ For the humanist Matteo Palmieri they enhance one's "bellezza di vita"; a house, its furnishings, and other appurtenances are necessary to the "splendido vivere de' privati cittadini."⁷⁴ It is into a context of splendor that the search for, and display of, late antique, early Christian, and Byzantine objects, as yet hardly differentiated,⁷⁵ fits best. Yet, before proceeding, certain cautions are in order. First, it is clear that magnificent spectacle was no invention of quattrocento Italy. It lay, as Richard Goldthwaite has demonstrated, at the very heart of feudal relations and the medieval ethos.⁷⁶ What is new is that this passion moved increasingly from the arena of public space to that of the private household. Secondly, it will be understood that the pursuit of things Byzantine was only a small part of the "anticomania"⁷⁷ that took Italy by storm in the fifteenth century and spread quickly throughout western Europe. However large an incentive ostentation may have been to later collectors, at least to some minds in Renaissance Italy the acquisition and exhibition of artifacts evinced almost a moral quality: a Venetian ambassador's report on Cesare Gonzaga, one of the greatest collectors of his day (1536–75), juxtaposes an observation on his splendid lifestyle with one on his natural grace. This combination, he reports, means that the duke is admired by everyone with whom he comes in contact.⁷⁸ Lastly, but of necessity treated first, there is the question of the

⁷⁰R. A. Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy* (Baltimore, 1993); on collecting, see especially 247–48.

⁷¹*Die Inventare des päpstlichen Schatzes in Avignon, 1314–1376*, ed. H. Hoberg, ST 3 (Vatican City, 1934), 261.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 382, 525.

⁷³S. da Castiglione, *Ricordi ovvero ammestramenti* (Venice, 1555), chap. 109, cited by Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art*, 249.

⁷⁴*Della vita civile*, ed. F. Battaglia (Bologna, 1944), 154, 164, cited by Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art*.

⁷⁵See part 3 below.

⁷⁶Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art*, 150–55.

⁷⁷I borrow the term from the title of a recent colloquium on modern collecting. See *L'Anticomanie: la collection d'antiquités aux 18e et 19e siècles. Colloque international Montpellier-Lattes, 1988* (Paris, 1992).

⁷⁸"Però con el viver splendidamente e con l'usar verso d'ognuno gran cortesia, la qual in lui pare naturale e non artificiosa, la grazia di tutto Mantova [sic] d'ognun che lo conosce." See C. M. Brown and A. M. Lorenzoni, *Our Accustomed Discourse on the Antique: Cesare Gonzaga and Gerolamo Garimberto, Two Renaissance Collectors of Greco-Roman Art* (New York, 1993), 9.

sources of supply. It is the size and nature of the demand for Greek objects that is emphasized below. Yet traditional statements to the effect that, with the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Italy was inundated with Byzantine works⁷⁹ beg the question of their availability.

The belief that the joint effect of Ottoman destruction and the flight to the West of such goods as survived was to drain the city of Byzantine artifacts surely misrepresents the state of affairs during the sultanate of Mehmed II (1451–81) and his immediate successors. The Conqueror, who was married to a Greek and is said to have lit candles in front of an icon of the Virgin,⁸⁰ was deeply concerned with the Christian objects collected in the wake of his victory. He issued a public proclamation that all relics were to be brought to him intact, together with ecclesiastical and imperial vestments. The Inner Treasury of his New Palace (today, Topkapı Sarayı) housed a collection of *objets d'art*, Byzantine regalia, manuscripts, and icons, while its outer garden contained a collection of antiquities. No doubt triumphalism played a part in these displays, as it did in the captured banners and other Byzantine trophies that were exhibited in the “royal armory,” i.e., the church of St. Irene, well into the sixteenth century.⁸¹ Many of these relics were dispersed by Bayezid II (1482–1512), who is said to have hated figural images of any sort and offered them to the rulers of Rhodes, France, and Italy in exchange for sequestering his estranged brother Cem. Icons and reliquaries were still being exported from Istanbul in 1489, as witness one of the Virgin with thirty saints, “each of whom held a relic in his hand,” according to a list of relics sent to Charles VIII of France in a Neapolitan document.⁸² Western residents in the city, not least a succession of Venetian *baili*, were well placed to secure objects that the sultans no longer wanted or that came onto the market. Thus, Alvise Gritti, the illegitimate son of the doge Andrea Gritti, was a jewel merchant in the service of Süleyman the Magnificent.

Transfers were by no means limited to easily portable objects. As long as Venice retained its naval authority in the eastern Mediterranean, marbles arrived in that city from Rhodes, Chios, Cyprus, Crete, and the coasts of the Peloponnesos and Asia Minor. And after dominion of the Aegean passed into the hands of the Turks, Venetians in Istanbul still sought huge blocks of stone. In the mid-sixteenth century, for instance, Antonio Priuli acquired an obelisk there, intending to set it up in the Campo Santo Stefano in his native city.⁸³ Yet it is the movement of richly illuminated books that is best recorded. The

⁷⁹E. Müntz, *Les arts à la cour des papes*, BEFAR 9, II (Paris, 1879), 135. For the larger, intellectual context in which such acquisitions were made, see A. Cutler, “The Pathos of Distance: Byzantium in the Gaze of Renaissance Europe and Modern Scholarship” in *Reframing the Renaissance: Studies in the Migration of Visual Culture*, ed. C. Farago (London, 1995).

⁸⁰G. Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (New York-Cambridge, Mass., 1991), 136. See also J. Raby, “A Sultan of Paradox: Mehmed the Conqueror as a Patron of Art,” *Oxford Art Journal* 1 (1982), 3–8.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 46–47.

⁸²F. Babinger, *Spätmittelalterliche fränkische Briefschaften aus dem grossherrlichen Seray zu Stamboul*, Südosteuropäische Arbeiten 61 (Munich, 1963), 112. The relics included the stone on which Jesus was said to have been born, “for which the Venetians wished to give the ‘Old Turk’ [Mehmed II] 30,000 ducats but which the Sultan responded he would not give for 100,000” (*ibid.*, 110–11). For an emerald carved in intaglio with an image of Christ sent by Bayezid II to Pope Innocent VIII, see J. H. Whitfield, “The Likeness of Christ: The Background of a Sixteenth-Century Icon,” *Apollo* (February 1992), 112–14.

⁸³I. Favaretto, *Arte antica e cultura antiquaria nelle collezioni venete al tempo della Serenissima* (Rome, 1990), 65, 158–60.

great Paris Psalter (B.N. gr. 139) was bought in Istanbul between 1557 and 1559 by the ambassador to Venice of Henry III of France.⁸⁴ Other manuscripts, still in Greek lands, continued to move westward as late as the seventeenth century. Entries in the Barberini Psalter (Vat. Barb. gr. 372), which there is no reason to disbelieve, record that Skarlatos Matzas, “noble archon of Thessaly and all Greece,” gave it to Cardinal Francesco Boncompagni on 27 August 1628, who, in turn, conveyed it to Francesco Barberini.⁸⁵

It is reasonable to suppose that princes of the Roman church preferred overtly Christian artifacts, but it is also necessary to recall that these same works were prized because, in the fifteenth century, they were already regarded as antiquities. A letter of Cardinal Jacopo Ammanati, referring to the ways in which the Venetian pope Paul II (1464–71) amassed works of art, makes the point precisely when it speaks of “*imagines sanctorum operis antiqui ex Graecia allatis, quas illi iconas vocant.*”⁸⁶ Even before becoming pope, Paul, as Cardinal Pietro Barbo, had assembled in his Palazzo San Marco (today, the Palazzo Venezia) what one late-nineteenth-century historian described as “the richest collection of works formed in Italy since the fall of the Roman empire.”⁸⁷ The inventory of his collection,⁸⁸ dated July 1457 but with the interpolation of many pieces acquired later, lists antique cameos, intaglios, and bronzes by the hundred. Still, it is clear that the fall of Constantinople three years earlier, if not the ensuing circumstances, afforded Barbo the opportunity to exercise a taste for Byzantine objects and, indeed, to set the fashion for works in several media. With the exception of the Twelve Feasts diptych given to the Florentine baptistery (Fig. 6), miniature mosaics were hitherto all but unknown in Italy.⁸⁹ Barbo possessed twenty-four, all evidently esteemed more for their workmanship than their materials, since their valuations in the inventory are considerably lower than those of painted panels housed in precious-metal or gem-studded settings. The concept of splendor here begins to diverge from the criteria of the appraiser,⁹⁰ taking on aspects of the taste of a connoisseur.

None of Barbo’s mosaics can be positively identified with any surviving panel and as

⁸⁴A. Cutler, *The Aristocratic Psalters in Byzantium*, Bibliothèque des Cahiers Archéologiques 13 (Paris, 1984), no. 39. On the mission of Istanbul of Jean Hurault de Boistaillé, see E. Charrière, *Négotiations de la France dans le Levant*, II (Paris, 1850), 421, 432, 452–53.

⁸⁵J. C. Anderson in *The Barberini Psalter: Codex Vaticanus Barberinanus Graecus 372* (Zurich-New York, 1991), 54.

⁸⁶Cited by Müntz, *Les arts*, II, 131 n. 4. R. Weiss, *Un umanista veneziano Papa Paolo II* (Venice-Rome, 1958), 28 n. 4, assigns the letter to the year 1468.

⁸⁷Müntz, *Les arts*, II, 128. Weiss, *Umanista veneziano*, was more concerned with Barbo’s literary interests and his restoration of ancient monuments. For a brief summary of the cardinal’s artistic activity, see L. Cardilli Alloisi, “Note sul collezionismo di Paolo II Barbo,” in *Da Pisanello alla nascita dei Musei Capitolini: L’antico a Roma alla Vigilia del Rinascimento*, exhib. cat. (Milan-Rome, 1988), 239–41.

⁸⁸Published by Müntz, *Les arts*, II, 181–237.

⁸⁹The only other mosaic icon firmly attested in Italy before 1453 is the Man of Sorrows, now enclosed in the so-called reliquary of St. Gregory the Great in San Croce in Gerusalemme in Rome. See Belting, *Bild und Kult* (note 53 above), 379–81, and S. Romano in *Splendori* (note 53 above), no. 41. I except, of course, the “piccole tavolette di mosaico,” made in fact of crushed eggshells by such artists as Gaddo Gaddi, on which see Vasari, *Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, ed. G. Milanesi, I (Florence, 1878), 348. To Gaddo was attributed the Pantokrator icon from the collection of Lorenzo de’ Medici when it arrived in the Bargello. See Furlan, *Icone bizantine* (note 23 above), 19.

⁹⁰A telling example is the notice of the mosaic icon of St. Michael, given by Elizabeth of Sicily to Bessarion (on which, see note 99 below). This is described (Müntz, *Les arts*, II, p. 298 n. 3) as “*hodie suis ornamentis spoliatur, de qua inferius dicitur.*”

much remains true of the seven works in this medium willed by Bessarion in 1462 and 1467 to the basilica of St. Peter's in Rome.⁹¹ Yet what we see as the huge loss of more than half the total number of miniature mosaics known today represents, in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, the diffusion of objects of exemplary significance. Whatever their source, such pieces appear with ever greater frequency in noble households of the time. The collection of Lorenzo de' Medici, inventoried upon his death in 1492,⁹² included eleven miniature mosaics of which at least six are described as "teste," a choice that perhaps reflects the current taste for half-length (or even closer) portraiture. The fact that two of the eleven mosaics depicted St. John the Baptist might also indicate the exercise of local preference for Florence's patron saint. If their identification as "quadri di musaicho" was sufficient to guarantee their Byzantine manufacture, this origin was specified for the pierced silver-gilt frames that continued to be prized. Individual examples are described as "lavorato alla grecha" or as decorated "a lettere greche."⁹³ Similar designations are applied to painted icons, such as an Annunciation and Christ on the Mount of Olives,⁹⁴ whose Eastern provenance might not have been obvious, while a copy of Maximos of Tyre, now in London (B. L. Harl. 5760), carries on its flyleaf the proud notation "Quest' autore fu di Grecia portato a Laur. di Medici da Gio. Lascari."⁹⁵

This new and self-evident liking for Greek things stands in marked contrast to tastes in the first half of the quattrocento. In the case of Andrea Squarcione, the teacher of Mantegna, we have ample knowledge of a notable, if admittedly more modest, earlier collection of antiquities⁹⁶ in which not a single item is either identified or identifiable as Greek. Scholars have sought to associate Byzantine objects listed in inventories with known works, efforts that are sometimes convincing,⁹⁷ and to hypothesize the means by which they reached Italy. For those who have attempted this second sort of connection, Bessarion, understandably, has been a prime choice.⁹⁸ Yet at least one of the cardinal's mosaics—an icon of St. Michael—was a gift from Elizabeth of Sicily⁹⁹ rather than a work

⁹¹ See Müntz, *Les arts*, II, 298–304.

⁹² Known from a MS of 1512. See now *Libro d'inventario dei beni di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, ed. M. Spallanzani and G. Gaeta Bertelà (Florence, 1992), which lends precision to the older, more familiar edition of E. Müntz, *Les collections des Médicis au XVe siècle: le musée, la bibliothèque, le mobilier* (Paris, 1888).

⁹³ Spallanzani and Gaeta Bertelà, *Libro d'inventario*, 47. It is worth remarking that the term *bisantino*, frequent in this document, has no topographical or political significance. It refers instead to a small gold roundel used as an ornament. See F. Altieri, *Dizionario italiano ed inglese*, 2nd ed. (London, 1749), s.v.

⁹⁴ Spallanzani and Gaeta Bertelà, *Libro d'inventario*, 80.

⁹⁵ H. Omont, *Notes sur les manuscrits grecs du British Museum* (Paris, 1884), 18.

⁹⁶ V. Lazzarini, "Documenti relativi alla pittura padovana del sec. XV," *NAVn* 15 (1908), 88–130.

⁹⁷ As in the case of the Pantokrator icon in the Bargello which was described in a Medicean inventory of 1589 as "un Christo di musaico, in adornamento d'ebano." Furlan, *Icone bizantine* (note 23 above), 19, pointed out that this mosaic is still encased in a 16th-century ebony frame. It is perhaps no less useful to connect such entries with preserved icons in terms of their type. Thus the sort of compound icon depicting multiple figures and surrounded by relics, described as in Bessarion's collection (Müntz, *Les arts*, II, 298 n. 3), is accessible to us in the mosaic of Sts. John Chrysostom, Basil, Nicholas, and Gregory now in the Hermitage (Furlan, *Icone bizantine*, no. 38).

⁹⁸ The Christ icon of Chimay, for instance, given by Sixtus IV to Charles de Croy (note 23 above) is almost invariably supposed to have reached the pope via Bessarion.

⁹⁹ Müntz, *Les arts*, II, 298 n. 3. Bessarion's attachment to this saint should be noticed: the story of this archangel was a principal subject of the decoration that the cardinal chose for his funerary chapel in Santi Apostoli in Rome, painted by Antoniazio Romano and Melozzo da Forlì between 1464 and 1468. This in-

that he himself had brought back from Greece. Like this image of the archangel, a number of mosaics may have made their way, as yet untraced, into¹⁰⁰ and out of Western collections before ending up, often centuries later, in church treasuries.¹⁰¹ It makes little sense to single out one figure, be he never so important a mediator in Greco-Italian relations, when the movement of icons of this sort represents a confluence of elite tastes in late Palaiologan Constantinople and late quattrocento Italy. Nor should we limit such preferences to miniature mosaics. As we have seen, the presence of an elaborate setting greatly enhanced the reputation of a panel in Italy, as it did in the Byzantium of Manuel Philes.¹⁰² Successive stages of framing, gilding, and sheathing could bring an old picture to the point where it was considered a fitting gift for a Western ruler. Such is the story of the Virgin of Freising, originally painted before 1235 and presented to Gian Galeazzo Visconti, duke of Milan (1378–1402), by an unidentified Byzantine emperor.¹⁰³

Bessarion's name has often been invoked in connection with a mosaic icon of St. Demetrios, now in Sassoferrato (Fig. 7), that is known to have belonged to his secretary, Niccolò Perotti. Yet the work itself is consistently dated to the fourteenth century,¹⁰⁴ implying that, like the Freising icon, it was a work that came into Italian hands only long after its creation. Such commentary ignores the fact that the shield held by the saint bears a rampant white lion, the blazon of the Perotti family. Thus the image would have been made for them, most likely between April 1449, when Niccolò's father, Francesco, was granted by Pope Nicholas II a brief recognizing the family's nobility, and 1460 when, on a mission to Germany with Bessarion, Niccolò received from the emperor Frederick III the right to add to his armorial bearings a black eagle with outstretched claws.¹⁰⁵ This feature is still missing from the escutcheon on the icon. That Perotti observed such heraldic niceties is evident from a manuscript of 1478 in his hand (Vat. Urb. lat. 301), which

terest has recently been interpreted as an expression of Bessarion's hope that Louis XI of France would support a crusade against the Turks. See V. Tiberia, *Antoniazio Romano per il cardinale Bessarione a Roma* (Todi, 1992).

¹⁰⁰ Thus, for example, a mosaic icon of the Virgin appears in the first half of the 16th century in the collection of Sebastiano Erizzo, son of a Venetian *bailo* in Istanbul. See I. Palumbo-Fossati, "Il collezionista Sebastiano Erizzo e l'inventario dei suoi beni," *Ateneo Veneto* 22 (1984), 216.

¹⁰¹ The fragmentary 14th-century icon of the Prodomos, now in Venice (Furlan, *Icone bizantine* [note 23 above], no. 33), makes its first appearance in L. Cicognara's inventory of the treasury of San Marco in 1816. See Gallo, *Tesoro* (note 6 above), 383, no. 13.

¹⁰² For his epigrams on commissioned frames, see H. Belting, *Das illuminierte Buch in der spätbyzantinischen Gesellschaft* (Heidelberg, 1970), 18–19, 48–49.

¹⁰³ For this history, see C. Wolters, "Beobachtungen am Freisinger Lukasbild," *Kunstchronik* 17 (1964), 85–91. A possible occasion for the transmission was the reception of Manuel II by Visconti in May (?) 1400. The icon was surely the subject of considerable attention in the last century of its history in Byzantium: it is hardly conceivable that the typically Palaiologan paranomasia, Η ΕΛΠΙΣ ΤΩΝ ΑΠΕΛΠΙΣΜΕΝΩΝ (cf. the epithet ἡ χώρα τοῦ ἀχորήτου applied to the Virgin at the Chora in Constantinople), inscribed in blue enamel on the metal ground added to the icon, was prepared for an Italian duke.

¹⁰⁴ S. Romano in *Splendori* (note 53 above), no. 42 (with literature). On the dating, Furlan, *Icone bizantine* (note 23 above), no. 41. Niccolò was born in or after September 1429 (G. Mercati, *Per la cronologia della vita e degli scritti di Niccolò Perotti arcivescovo di Siponto*, ST 44 [Vatican City, 1925], 16), became archbishop of Siponto in 1458, and died in 1480.

¹⁰⁵ Mercati, *Per la cronologia*, 6 n. 1, 51. This Western imperial device stands in marked contrast to the white lion which, at least in 10th-century Constantinople, was an emblem worn at court by *stratores*. For such σκαρამάγγια λευκολέοντα, see *De ceremoniis*, ed. J. J. Reiske, Bonn ed. (1829), I, 576, line 17, and 578, line 5.

exhibits both the lion and eagle; by contrast, a Rhetoric (Vat. Urb. lat. 1180) that he wrote in 1446 displays only the simpler, unquartered device.¹⁰⁶ Today much of the mosaic's silver revetment is missing, although the cantonnated B's (the tetrabasileion) and the double-headed eagles imply some association with the Palaiologan family. When it was studied by Bettini in 1938, its lower frame still contained an ampulla inscribed O AFION MYPON.¹⁰⁷ This, together with the image of Demetrios, suggests Perotti's desire to place himself under the saint's protective powers. Whether the icon was made in Salonika, indeed, whether Perotti ever visited the city, I have been unable to establish. But we know that in the early 1450s, on a trip to the East to buy manuscripts for Bessarion, he went as far as Trebizond.¹⁰⁸ At best the cardinal's role in the procurement of the icon would seem to be incidental.

If the Sassoferrato mosaic was made for Perotti, it represents a direct appropriation of Byzantine splendor that other Renaissance worthies could achieve only indirectly and often by means of epigraphy. The objects most receptive to such inscription were hard-stone vessels, and the best-known exponent of this practice was Lorenzo de' Medici. Placing his (abbreviated) name on such vessels as a sardonyx cup, still in Florence, he encouraged emulation by his contemporaries as is witnessed by a Byzantine cup in Paris, carved from the same stone and inscribed with the motto of Pietro Soderini (1450–1513), gonfaloniere for life of the Florentine republic.¹⁰⁹ Yet the *ex post facto* "customizing" of artifacts reverts at least to Pietro Barbo, a large number of whose possessions passed, upon his death in 1471, to Lorenzo. The inventory of this by then papal collection describes in unusually rich detail five textiles which, despite the lemma "pani recamati, et maxime greci" are all either specified as "Greek" or, on the basis of their figurative content and/or inscriptions, identifiable as Byzantine.¹¹⁰ These included a depiction of Constantine and Helena, shown in imperial costume and blessed by Christ, said to be woven in gold, silver, and silk, and one with the less familiar iconography of Sts. Basil and Makrina beneath the Virgin's outstretched hands. All five cloths are said to contain the arms of the cardinal. He likewise put his mark on a pair of ivory plaques which, from their description, can be recognized as the "Loving Couples" diptych today in Brescia.¹¹¹ This he had set in a silver-gilt case adorned with his blazon and inscribed with appropriate verses.¹¹²

Barbo, as perhaps may now be expected, also owned ivory icons and wooden panels embellished with ivory figures. Nothing in their description allows us to identify them as Byzantine,¹¹³ but such a provenance would seem justified for objects that belonged to other Italians of the period. The postmortem inventory of the possessions of Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga (d. 1483), who, it has recently been suggested, acquired icons from

¹⁰⁶ Mercati, *Per la cronologia*, pls. I, v.

¹⁰⁷ S. Bettini, "Appunti per lo studio dei mosaici portatili bizantini," *Felix Ravenna* (1938), 19–20.

¹⁰⁸ L. Mohler, *Kardinal Bessarion als Theologe, Humanist und Staatsmann*, I (Paderborn, 1923), 266, 409.

¹⁰⁹ Both vessels are discussed by D. Alcouffe in *Byzance* (note 37 above), no. 213.

¹¹⁰ Müntz, *Les arts* (note 79 above), II, 207–8.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 236; W. F. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters*, 3rd ed. (Mainz, 1976), no. 66. On the diptych's later history, see p. 266 below.

¹¹² An 18th-century watercolor depicting the ivory in this setting is reproduced in *Collezioni di antichità a Venezia nei secoli della Repubblica*, exhib. cat., ed. M. Zorzi (Rome, 1988), fig. 3.

¹¹³ Müntz, *Les arts*, II, 205–6.

Barbo, includes “doe [*sic*] anchonette grece vecchie una cum crucifixo e l'altra cum Nosttra Dona.”¹¹⁴ These were presumably wooden panels. Two ivory objects—a “scatola d'avolio da hostie” and an “anchona d'avolio”¹¹⁵—are not described as Greek, but the two criteria minimally necessary to establish Gonzaga's ownership of a Byzantine ivory come together in an object so curious that, to my mind, there can be little doubt about its identity. This is a “sallera de alicorno cum littere greco intorno in una caseta de ariento cum l'arma de Constantinopoli.”¹¹⁶ Its silver container with “the arms of Constantinople” (a Tyche? Anthousa?) is today lost, but the only known “salt cellar” with Greek lettering around it is the so-called Palaiologan pyxis at Dumbarton Oaks (Fig. 8). The provenance of this piece can be traced no further back than its presence at the beginning of the twentieth century in the Stroganoff collection in Rome.¹¹⁷ If, as Nicolas Oikonomides argued, the object postdates 1403–4,¹¹⁸ and if, as David Chambers suggested, it was brought to the West by Bessarion who, from 1439, with the exception of brief trips to France and Germany, spent the rest of his life in Italy, then an interval of at most two generations interrupts our knowledge of its early history.

Attempts to pursue Byzantine ivories in Italian collections of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries lead, as I have suggested above of the Gothic era, to the conclusion that they were rare indeed. I know of only two other pieces whose existence can be maintained with a fair degree of probability. The first is a large plaque of Christ enthroned, formerly in the Trivulzio collection in Milan and then in the possession of Robert von Hirsch in Basel¹¹⁹ before it spent a period, divorced from the book cover to which it had been applied, on loan to Dumbarton Oaks. The niello roundels on this silver cover included one with the arms of Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, who became Pope Julius II in 1503 (Fig. 9). Before this date, and specifically in 1500, if the inscription is properly interpreted,¹²⁰ the cardinal, like other high churchmen we have considered, associated his name with this huge tenth-century ivory.¹²¹ The pride of possession evident in such an act is considerably diminished with respect to an ivory known to have been in one of the major collections of Baroque Rome. The great triptych now in the Palazzo Venezia (Fig. 14) can be identified in the inventory of Cardinal Francesco Barberini's goods drawn up in January 1628.¹²² But neither the ivory nor any object associated with it

¹¹⁴D. S. Chambers, *A Renaissance Cardinal and His Worldly Goods: The Will and Inventory of Francesco Gonzaga (1444–1483)*, Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts 20 (London, 1992), 164, no. 598. Again, Robert Nelson was kind enough to draw my attention to this document.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 156, nos. 417, 418.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 61 and 159, no. 497.

¹¹⁷K. Weitzmann, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Medieval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection*, III: *Ivories and Steatites* (Washington, D.C., 1972), no. 31.

¹¹⁸N. Oikonomides, “John VIII Palaeologus and the Ivory Pyxis at Dumbarton Oaks,” *DOP* 31 (1977), 329–37.

¹¹⁹*The Robert von Hirsch Collection*, II: *Works of Art*, Sotheby Parke Bernet and Co., sale cat., 22 June 1978, lot no. 273. For its presence in the Trivulzio collection in Milan, see G. Seregni, *Don Carlo Trivulzio e la cultura milanese dell'età sua (1715–1789)* (Milan, 1927), 203–4.

¹²⁰Ibid.: IRSC/RAMD = I(ulianus) R(uere) S(avonensis) C(ardinalis) R(everendissimus, renovavit or restituit?) A(nno) MD.

¹²¹On the ivory's technique and date, see Cutler, *Hand of the Master* (note 2 above), 45–48, 65, 84, 207, 217. It is once more in a private collection in Switzerland.

¹²²M. A. Lavin, *Seventeenth-Century Barberini Documents and Inventories of Art* (New York, 1975), 88, no. 323. This entry describes “un pezzo d'avolio . . . con 16 Santi fatti di basso rilievo, con li Sportelli, e di Fuora alli

betrays this stage of its ownership. Were it not for the inventory, the triptych, like most Byzantine ivories, would remain unknown before its scholarly recognition in the middle of the eighteenth century.¹²³

The virtual invisibility of Byzantine objects save in a few great houses after the fall of Constantinople subtends a moral little different from that suggested by the difficulty of demonstrating their presence in Italy between 1204 and 1453. If examples of splendid metalwork, hardstone and ivory carving, enamels, and textiles shimmered in their moments of glory in the quattrocento and later, they remained numerically inferior to the much larger store of classical objects or subordinate members of collections of relics whose adjuncts or vehicles they often were. It is no accident that, until the birth of antiquarianism, our principal documentation for Byzantine artifacts is contained in the inventories of assessors: their significance is measured out in ducats and, even by that standard, they remained unimportant. This somewhat discouraging view is sustained when we seek to identify their effects. To the best of my knowledge not one of the mosaic icons with which we have been concerned can be shown to have provoked an artistic response in either monumental art or their own miniature format; masterpieces like the Palazzo Venezia triptych found no echo in Counter-Reformation or Baroque painting or sculpture; the landscapes, personifications, and battle scenes of the Joshua Roll had no impact on the dozens of versions of the Transport of the Ark or the Fall of Jericho depicted on the walls of Italian churches or in illustrated books. That this neglect was symptomatic of the culture as a whole, rather than the taste of "independent" painters, is evidenced by the commentary of Giovanni Battista Armenini, the late-sixteenth-century theoretician of the art of painting. Reporting on palaces and houses in northern and central Italy that possessed pictures by Titian, Correggio, and Giulio Romano, he found these "con mirabil' arte fornite di eccetto di pitture delle Sacre imagine." These, he added with a ferocity that outdid Vasari, "erano la maggiore parte quadretti di certe figure, fatte alla Greca, goffissime, dispiacevoli e tutte affumicate."¹²⁴

Certainly, Byzantine objects continued to be tendered and acquired, bought and sold. But they figure ever less conspicuously in the huge lots that came to be traded, as when in 1573 the dealers Giovanni and Antonio Stampa, through Pirro Ligorio, offered to the duke of Ferrara a vast collection of marble figures and statues, together with fifty "pezzi di libri . . . quasi tutti molto antichi greci e latini" for a total sum of 4,630 ducats.¹²⁵ Certainly, relics said to be brought from Constantinople continued to excite attention, as when a Gospel book, allegedly in the hand of Mark the Evangelist, was carried from Murano to the treasury of San Marco in a procession that included the patriarch of Venice, the doge and Signoria, and a great company of nobles and citizens.¹²⁶ But even

Sportelli otto altri Santi fatti alla greca . . ." The only known triptych which has sixteen saints (if one includes the Christ) on the inside and eight on the wings is that in the Palazzo Venezia. Learned investigation of the 18th century also traced two other ivories (which may not be Byzantine) to the Barberini library. See Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Elfenbeinskulpturen* (note 30 above), II, no. 221.

¹²³ This is not to argue that archaeologically minded painters like Mantegna were uninterested in what they could learn of Byzantine monuments. On this question, see M. Vickers, "Mantegna and Constantinople," *Burlington Magazine* 118 (1976), 680–87.

¹²⁴ G. B. Armenini, *De veri precetti della pittura* (Ravenna, 1587), 188.

¹²⁵ *Documenti inedite per servire alla storia dei Musei d'Italia*, II (Florence-Rome, 1879), 169–70.

¹²⁶ Recorded under the rubric "relique portate di Costantinopoli" in an inventory of 1520, but purporting to describe a *translatio* of 1420 (Gallo, *Tesoro* [note 6 above], 304–5, no. 21).

in this domain, regard for creations of the past tended to yield to the concerns of the present and was soon effaced. The icon of Christ's passion, presented by Bessarion to the Venetian Scuola della Carità (mentioned at the start of this section), offers perhaps the most telling example. A Crucifixion surrounded by events from the Kiss of Judas to the Entombment,¹²⁷ this panel is in fact the sliding lid of a reliquary containing a triple-barred Byzantine silver filigree cross, in the cantons of which are compartments for relics, two archangels *en buste*, and crude full-length images of Constantine and Helena painted on glass¹²⁸ let into a star-filled ground of blue enamel. This setting is almost certainly a Venetian addition, yet it is this, not the older Crucifixion icon,¹²⁹ that is depicted in a portrait of Bessarion in the Biblioteca Marciana (Fig. 10).¹³⁰

The staurothèque was formally conveyed to the Carità in August 1463 at a ceremony attended by Niccolò Perotti, now archbishop of Siponto, when the cardinal came to Venice as legate of Pope Pius II, seeking support for a new crusade against the Turks. But it did not in fact reach the school until July 1472, in the year that Bessarion died. The reliquary was then displayed, at the doge's orders, beneath the Pala d'Oro on the high altar of San Marco. By this time its complex origin, like that of the Pala long before,¹³¹ had been forgotten. A huge procession through the Piazza San Marco, as commemorated in pictures by Giovanni Bellini,¹³² and across the canal on a wooden bridge constructed for the occasion, celebrated its revered donor and treated the relic as a token of pristine Christianity. No mention of the object's Byzantine past is made in the letter, written by Ulisse Aliotto, *guardiano* of the Carità, that gives an account of the procession. This history—that the cross had belonged to a Gregory Pneumatikos (probably Gregory III Mammes, patriarch of Constantinople from 1443 to 1450 [?]) and a certain "Irene Palaio-logina, daughter of the emperor's brother"¹³³—had been recalled in the original deed of the gift of 1463,¹³⁴ and was moreover inscribed on the sides of the cross, by this time buried beneath the Western addition to the reliquary. Disregarded already by 1472, its

¹²⁷ Frequently reproduced, e.g., in Frolow, *Les reliquaires de la Vraie Croix* (Paris, 1965), fig. 49, and J. Beckwith, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth, 1979), fig. 291.

¹²⁸ The most accurate description of the object, the elements of which are often confused in later accounts, is by G. Fogolari, "La teca del Bessarione e la croce di San Teodoro di Venezia," *Dedalo* 3 (1922/23), 138–60.

¹²⁹ Declining to date the Crucifixion icon, L. Moretti in *Venezia e Bisanzio*, exhib. cat., ed. I. Furlan (Venice, 1974), no. 112 (with rich bibliography), agreed with an earlier opinion (V. N. Lazarev, *Storia della pittura bizantina* [Turin, 1967], 440 n. 256) that it was painted by "a Constantinopolitan master emigrated to Venice." Beckwith, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* (as in note 127), assigned it to the late 14th or early 15th century.

¹³⁰ According to Fogolari, "La teca del Bessarione," 149, this picture was painted by Giannetto Cordegliari or Andrea Previtali, after 1540, and reproduced an earlier version (by Gentile Bellini?) that had been stolen.

¹³¹ Laurent, "Mémoires" (note 15 above), 222–25. For the circumstances, see Nelson, "Italian Appreciation and Appropriation." Cf. also p. 261 below.

¹³² P. F. Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio* (New Haven, Conn., 1988), pls. XII, XVIII. The picture represents the procession in honor of a relic of the True Cross, obtained from Kallistos I, patriarch of Constantinople (1350–53 and 1355–63) by Philippe de Maizières, grand chancellor of Cyprus, who gave it to the Scuola di San Giovanni Evangelista in 1396. See Frolow, *La relique* (note 21 above), no. 752.

¹³³ Frolow, *La relique*, no. 872, preferred to identify Irene as the niece of John VIII rather than of Michael IX, as Fogolari, "La teca del Bessarione," 152, had argued, supposing that the patriarch had given it to Bessarion, a fellow refugee in the West. If Frolow's reading is correct, Bessarion's role in the reliquary's history would be confined to its transfer to the Carità, but see note 135 below.

¹³⁴ Fogolari, "La teca del Bessarione," 148.

past remained concealed until unearthed by scholarly investigation in the second half of the eighteenth century.¹³⁵

3. THE OBJECTS OF SCHOLARSHIP

When, in the 1760s, Giovanni Battista Schioppalalba wrote his dissertation on the Bessarion reliquary, he behaved as does any well-trained, twentieth-century practitioner of the genre. He studied the object, taking advantage of an occasion when it was dismembered for restoration purposes, made notes on and sketches of its various parts. He followed up by reading all the relevant primary sources in the Biblioteca Marciana and collated his findings with the “standard” works on what was by then already called Byzantine history—Du Cange’s *Glossarium* (Paris, 1678) and Banduri’s *Imperium orientale* (Paris, 1711). Yet it would be a mistake to see this approach as either a novelty or as a precocious expression of that “objective” historicism demanded by Ranke and other nineteenth-century scholars. First, so focused a study had been the purpose of Filippo da Venuti, whose account of the Cortona reliquary (Fig. 2) may have been the first monograph ever devoted to a Byzantine object.¹³⁶ Secondly, Schioppalalba was a member of the Scuola della Carità, to which Bessarion had given his staurothèque, just as Venuti had an interest vested in the reliquary brought from Nicaea: on the title page of his dissertation, Venuti describes himself as *patricius Cortoniensis*. We are faced with expressions, albeit exalted ones, of the “local history” that would be practiced by clergymen and teachers all over Europe into the twentieth century.

This erudition was, then, an oblique version of that search for the splendid object that would reflect on the person, the house, or the treasury possessing it. Since the time of Lorenzo de’Medici, at the latest, collectors had employed agents—some of them artists—to scout for such pieces and authenticate others that came onto the market. Thus in March 1505 Isabella d’Este returned to Rome an ivory head that Mantegna and the sculptor Gian Cristoforo Romano had judged to be “neither antique nor good.”¹³⁷ The dedicatory prefaces in the books of countless antiquaries from this time onward show that patrons exercised a similar relationship with those who could draw attention to their possessions. It was a mutually beneficial relationship. The scholar gained access to a notable, often local, collection; in turn, the owner’s reputation as a connoisseur was magnified. Sebastiano Donati, with whose interpretation we shall be concerned below, studied the leaf of the “sacro dittico,” which is today at Dumbarton Oaks (Fig. 11), in the *museo* of Francescomaria Fiorentini in Lucca. Here too, in 1753, he published the earliest

¹³⁵G. B. Schioppalalba, *In perantiquam sacram tabulam Graecam insigni sodalitis Sanctae mariae Caritatis Venetiarum ab amplissimo cardinali Bessarione dona datam dissertatio* (Venice, 1767), esp. 123–29. He claims to have seen Gregory III’s will and thus to know that the patriarch brought the reliquary from Constantinople in 1451 and presented it to Bessarion in 1459 (pp. 118–19). Schioppalalba’s engraving (pl. iv), recording the names on the sides of the cross, is reproduced by Fogolari, “La teca del Bessarione,” 143. The history of the reliquary and its conversion into an icon has recently been retold by R. Polacco, “La storia del reliquario bessarione dopo il rinvenimento del verso della croce scomparsa,” *Saggi e Memorie di Storia dell’Arte* 18 (1992), 87–94.

¹³⁶Philippus de Venutis, *De cruce Cortonensi dissertatio* (Livorno, 1751). Like Schioppalalba, this author drew on Du Cange, depending notably on the latter’s *Familiae augustae byzantinae* (1680).

¹³⁷A. Venturi, “Gian Cristoforo Romano,” *Archivio Storico dell’Arte* 1 (1888), 108. Other objects in her collection became family heirlooms. We know, for example, that she left ivories (their nature unspecified) from her oratory to daughters who were nuns. See M. Fletcher in *Splendours of the Gonzaga*, exhib. cat., ed. D. Chambers and J. Martineau (London, 1981), 62.

comparative work on Roman and Byzantine examples of the form.¹³⁸ The event is worth noting since it marks the first time that ivory diptychs were distinguished from the “molte anticaglie d’urne cinerarie di marmo con iscrizioni, d’urne Etrusche Aretine, Idoli, Medaglie e Cammei” that Donati observed in Fiorentini’s collection. The same passage makes clear what the possession of such artifacts does for the prestige of their owner: Francescomaria is thereby “cotanto cognito nella Repubblica Letteraria.” On this definition, collecting is understood as a philological enterprise.¹³⁹

Donati’s investigation signals one stage by which late antique and medieval objects were differentiated from those of the classical world, but he was not alone in this undertaking. Indeed, at this very moment the Florentine savant Gori was preparing his great corpus, the *Thesaurus veterum diptychorum*, which he would not live to see in print¹⁴⁰ but which is still, though all too rarely, consulted today. Its publication was arranged by Giovanni Battisti Passeri who added a supplement that expanded Gori’s trawl to include works in the Museo Passerio, i.e., his own collection in Pesaro. If such a step represents “local history” at its purest, it yet suggests the relation between the way in which Byzantine objects, like the relics and reliquaries given to the Sienese Ospedale di Santa Maria della Scala in 1359,¹⁴¹ and those first reported in Passeri’s contribution, had entered similar institutions. Of the plaques with four scenes from the life of Christ (Fig. 12), still in Pesaro, that Adolph Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann suggested might have been the wings of a triptych,¹⁴² Passeri notes that they were once attached to the cover of a Gospel book in the “secretiore archivio Ecclesiae antiquissimae hospitalis domus Eugubii,”¹⁴³ that is, a church hospital in his native city of Gubbio. In this instance there was no need for the sort of painstaking research that enabled Gori to trace Nicoletta da Grioni’s gift of the mosaic in Florence (Fig. 6) back through the archives of the Arte di Calimala to the court at Constantinople.¹⁴⁴

As in the Renaissance, moreover, early-eighteenth-century collectors put their stamp on their possessions. Hieronymus Wilhelm Ebner, the Nuremberger who lent his name to the Codex Ebnerianus in Oxford (Fig. 4) discussed above,¹⁴⁵ literally branded its silver cover with his identity. Flanking the tenth-century ivory Christ he imposed the inscription ΔΕΠΙΟΤΑ ΕΥΛΟΓΕ CON ΤΟΝ ΔΟΥΛΟΝ ΕΛΑΧΙΧΤΟΝ ΙΕΡΟΝΥΜΟΝ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΕΑΜΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΗΝ ΟΙΚΙΑΝ ΑΥΤΟΥ. Beyond the omission, *more byzantino*, of his surname, it is clear that he was aware of specifically Byzantine modes of invocation. Unless we presume that this familiarity derived from his personal experience of monuments or texts, the inscription suggests the intervention of some scholar he employed for the occasion.

It is such anonymous contributions that constitute the most obscure (and fascinating)

¹³⁸S. Donati, *Dei dittici degli antichi profani e sacri*, 3 vols. (Lucca, 1753). For the diptych now divided between Dumbarton Oaks and Gotha, see III, 188–99.

¹³⁹Thus the term *museo*, used at this time to denote a private cabinet of antiquities, alludes to the goddesses of epic and lyric poetry, history, etc. No Muse was the patron of what are today called the “fine arts.”

¹⁴⁰Gori died in 1757, two years before the publication of the *Thesaurus*. He had earlier written books on, inter alia, Roman inscriptions and the language of the Etruscans.

¹⁴¹See Derenzini, “Esame paleografico” (note 44 above).

¹⁴²Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Elfenbeinskulpturen* (note 30 above), II, no. 211.

¹⁴³Gori, *Thesaurus*, III, 33–36. Passeri’s additional information, to the effect that he obtained the plaques from Giovanni Hieronimo Carlino, a professor of rhetoric in Gubbio, suggests the scholarly intercourse by which, independent of any “artistic” value, such objects changed hands.

¹⁴⁴See p. 245 above.

¹⁴⁵See pp. 243–44 above.

chapter in the history of responses to Byzantine antiquities. One of the earliest must be the “sizeable disc of porphyry”¹⁴⁶ set into the pavement of Cosimo de’Medici’s chapel. Rab Hatfield proposed that this *rota* was due to awareness at the Florentine *palazzo* that visiting dignitaries to the “imperial chapel” in Constantinople prostrated themselves before the emperor on just such a slab.¹⁴⁷ In fact, the site reported for such obeisances is a konsistorion of the throne room in the Great Palace,¹⁴⁸ a more apt setting for proskynesis than a chapel where only a holy image would receive honors of this sort.¹⁴⁹ If, as I suspect, the *rota* were intended to mark the spot where Cosimo prayed, then the still extant *πορφυροῦν ὁμφάλιον* before the bema of Hagia Sophia¹⁵⁰ was the likelier model. At any rate, given that the manuscript of the *De ceremoniis*, which records these features, lay undiscovered in Leipzig for another three centuries, if Cosimo’s disk emulated a Byzantine, rather than an Italian,¹⁵¹ exemplar, the report of some archaeologically minded traveler to Constantinople would seem to be a condition of its appearance in quattrocento Florence.

The fall of the city to the Turks did not put an end to attempts to assign to objects in the West a glorious Byzantine pedigree. The well-known mosaic icon of the Virgin Eleousa in Santa Maria della Salute in Venice¹⁵² displays on its reverse two figures kneeling in prayer beside a red cross and set between two painted scrolls (Fig. 13). These claim that the image was made in 1115 by one Theodosius Constantinopol(itanus) nobilis who gave it to the invincible emperor Manuel; the latter put it in a silver container and made Theodosius a baron (!) for his pains. Despite the fact that many scholars accepted this text at face value, Viktor Lazarev and Otto Demus were surely correct to find it absurd.¹⁵³ Yet it is our tests—for correct titlature and an imperial name that agrees with the posited date—not the different demands made of this text by its seventeenth-century Venetian audience¹⁵⁴ that expose the forgery for what it is. The readiness to invest credence in a claim is a function of a culture’s expectations. Thus we can be sure that the German priest Ludolf von Südheim, returning through Venice from a trip to the East about 1350, had no intention to deceive when he recounted that the city was built entirely of materials brought from Troy,¹⁵⁵ and that the notary Niccolò Martino of Carinola (near Capua) was

¹⁴⁶R. Hatfield, “Cosimo de’Medici and his Chapel,” in *Cosimo “il Vecchio” de’Medici, 1389–1464*, ed. F. Ames-Lewis (Oxford, 1992), 228–29.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸*De ceremoniis*, I, 406, lines 7–11.

¹⁴⁹A. Cutler, *Transfigurations: Studies in the Dynamics of Byzantine Iconography* (University Park, Penn., 1975), 59, 61, 91–100.

¹⁵⁰*De ceremoniis*, I, 15, line 11.

¹⁵¹For earlier Italian porphyry *rotae*, see J. Deér, *The Dynastic Porphyry Tombs of the Norman Period in Sicily* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), 155–56, and W. Tronzo, “The Prestige of St. Peter’s: Observations on the Function of Monumental Narrative Cycles in Italy,” *Studies in the History of Art* 16 (1985), esp. 100–104.

¹⁵²S. Romano in *Splendori* (note 53 above), no. 38. It seems clear to me that the figures labeled “e.i.” and “t.n.” on its parchment backing are intended to be read as E(manuele) i(mperator) and T(theodosius) n(obilis). The former wears a reasonable simulation of imperial brocade and has a crown beside him, but, among many reasons to reject this “document,” both figures wear red shoes.

¹⁵³For Demus and Lazarev, see the literature as cited in *ibid.*

¹⁵⁴The icon was given to the Salute by the patrician Matteo Bon. An analogous fraud is the 17th-century inscription at the base of the perfectly authentic, 14th-century mosaic icon of St. Theodore Tyro in the Vatican Library (*ibid.*, no. 43), claiming it to be a work of the 11th century.

¹⁵⁵J. Morton Paton, *Chapters on Medieval and Renaissance Visitors to Greek Lands* (Princeton, 1951), 34.

believed when he reported, at the end of the same century, an icon of the Virgin in the Parthenon church painted by St. Luke and a Gospel book at the same site written in gold by St. Helena.¹⁵⁶

The mistakes of the innocent may be compounded when an institution has a special interest in perpetuating a myth. Wishing to maintain a glorious past for a revered object, the archivists who inventoried the treasury of San Marco in 1580 still insisted that the upper part of the Pala d'Oro, recognized by the Greek mission to the Council of Florence as loot from the Pantokrator monastery,¹⁵⁷ had come from Hagia Sophia.¹⁵⁸ A hundred years later, authorities in the same position were ready to admit a moment of doubt: among the clerics, some were skeptical that a knife said by some to be that with which St. Peter had cut off Malchus' ear could possibly be the one that Christ had used at the Last Supper.¹⁵⁹ Even Peiresc, probably the most learned antiquary of the seventeenth century, believed, as he wrote to Cassiano dal Pozzo, that the island of Sicily contained mountains of fossil ivory and giants' teeth.¹⁶⁰

Scholars not only traced the histories of artifacts but had sometimes a profound effect on their interpretation and fate. While consolidating an object that was falling to bits, a seventeenth-century humanist in Rome removed some of the scenes and recarved parts of the inscription on the so-called David casket in the Palazzo Venezia to the point where its Byzantine origin remained contested until 1988.¹⁶¹ Pursuing the provenance of an ivory plaque which was at some point inscribed with the name of a still unidentified praesul named Bertold,¹⁶² Passeri was able to show that it had been lovingly treasured in Rome after its transmission from Germany. Although he confused the name of the pope in whose oratory this image of the Virgin was kept, his account is sufficient to explain why it was, in Passeri's own day, kept in a place of honor above the altar of the de Ricci family chapel in Santa Maria Novella in Florence and even, if we reconstruct his findings, the probable way in which it reached Germany from Constantinople.¹⁶³ Yet destruction as much as preservation could result from scholarly intervention, as the history of a green and black porphyry vase, long in the cathedral of Troyes, indicates. Brought to France

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 29.

¹⁵⁷ See note 131 above.

¹⁵⁸ Gallo, *Tesoro* (note 6 above), 304, no. 19.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 321, no. 66.

¹⁶⁰ Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc: *Lettres à Cassiano dal Pozzo (1626–1637)*, ed. J.-F. Lhote and D. Joyal (Clermont-Ferrand, 1989), 176, 198. The belief is, of course, founded on a story first related as his personal experience by Augustine of Hippo, *Civ. Dei*, XV, 9.

¹⁶¹ A. Cutler and N. Oikonomides, "An Imperial Byzantine Casket and Its Fate at a Humanist's Hands," *Art B* 70 (1988), 77–87. For the older alternatives proposed, see 80–81.

¹⁶² Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Elfenbeinskulpturen* (note 30 above), II, no. 50, for the modern history of this object now in Berlin. Although they cited in their bibliography the discussion in Gori (*Thesaurus*, as in note 163 below) to which I refer, the authors failed to exploit its implications.

¹⁶³ In Gori, *Thesaurus*, III, 21–23. Here Passeri indicates that the "ancient image of the Mother of God" was formerly set "supra portam sanctam, Oratorio olim a Ioanne VI . . . constructo." If for John VI we read John XVI, we arrive at a Calabrian Greek originally named John Philagathos, who was a favorite of the empress Theophano and was sent by Otto III on a mission to Constantinople in 995. Upon his return, Philagathos was briefly (997–998) antipope. On his personality and career, see now I. Ševčenko, "Byzanz und der Westen im 10. Jahrhundert" in *Kunst im Zeitalter der Kaiserin Theophanu*, Akten des Internationalen Colloquiums veranstaltet vom Schnütgen-Museum, Köln, 13.–15. Juni 1991, ed. A. von Euw and P. Schreiner (Cologne, 1993), 21–22.

in or shortly after 1204, it carried a silver band with a Greek inscription identifying it as the cup used at the Last Supper. It was ignored in the Middle Ages and unreported in an early-fifteenth-century inventory,¹⁶⁴ presumably because the Greek claim had still not been read. In 1611 the object is recorded but with no reference to the Holy Grail. Between that year and 1789 the inscription must have been deciphered and publicized, for the vase was destroyed by a Revolutionary mob, along with other pieces regarded as relics of superstition.

The results of learned investigation were, more usually, an awareness, often for the first time, of how objects came to be where they were and, secondly, of how they could be used to support political and moral concerns of the moment. Where before the presence of relics and their containers had been treated as apodictic, requiring, that is, no further scrutiny or explanation, by the seventeenth century they were things demanding a history if not a justification.¹⁶⁵ At the very least the notices published by scholars like Gori and Passeri enable us to identify the whereabouts of ivories that, in the standard modern corpus, were treated as if no knowledge of them existed before the late nineteenth century. Thus the well-known plaque showing the creation of Adam and Eve and the stoning of Abel, probably from a Genesis box and now in Lyon,¹⁶⁶ was, until at least 1759, in the collection of Niccolò Baruffaldi in Ferrara. But beyond the purely factual level, Gori's and Passeri's information affords insights into the "afterlife" of Byzantine objects and, in particular, the uses of pieces not yet squirreled away in private *musei*. The rich assemblage of ivories in the treasury of the Milan cathedral includes a huge pair of plaques with scenes from the life of Christ known as the *dittico greco*.¹⁶⁷ These are remarkable not only for their size (31.0 × 10.7 cm each leaf) but also for a degree of abrasion exceeding that suffered by almost any other Byzantine ivory. While often remarked, this wear has never been explained. Passeri notes that, before their discovery in the sacristy of Sant'Ambrogio in the same city, they were frequently exposed on the altar and often shown from the ambo by the clergy before being displayed on what he calls the *clavicularium ebdomadarium*. In the course of litanies on feast days they were regularly kissed.¹⁶⁸ Such liturgical use echoes the role that many consular diptychs played in the Middle Ages,¹⁶⁹ but the fact that Byzantine ivories served likewise (and long) in Italian church rituals has till now gone unnoticed.

We do not know if the "sacro dittico" (Fig. 11), one leaf of which Donati studied in

¹⁶⁴P. J. Geary, "Saint Helena of Athyra and the Cathedral of Troyes in the Thirteenth Century," *Journal of Renaissance and Medieval Studies* 7 (1977), 156 (with literature).

¹⁶⁵This change in the ontological status of objects is well understood by K. Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities: Paris and Venice, 1500–1800* (Cambridge, 1990), 34–40.

¹⁶⁶Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Elfenbeinskulpturen* (note 30 above), I, no. 70, who again cite the references in Gori where the plaque is twice reproduced (*Thesaurus*, II, 161, and Passeri's supplement to III, p. iii), without discussion in the text, but fail to infer its presence in Ferrara in the mid-18th century.

¹⁶⁷C. Rizzardi in *Splendori* (note 53 above), no. 71.

¹⁶⁸In Gori, *Thesaurus*, III, 259–60. The diptych may be one described as used liturgically in the 12th-century text of Beroldus, *Ecclesiae Ambrosianae Mediolanensis Kalendarium et ordines*, ed. M. Magistretti (Milan, 1894), 48, lines 30–31 and 63, line 1. The object was still in the cathedral treasury and serving essentially the same function in 1444. See M. Magistretti, "Due inventari del Duomo di Milano del secolo XV," *AStLomb* 36 (1909), 326, no. 58. I am grateful to Dale Kinney for a useful exchange of information on this score.

¹⁶⁹See, for example, the important study by J.-M. Sansterre, "Où le diptyque consulaire de Clementinus fut-il remployé à une fin liturgique?" *Byzantion* 54 (1984), 641–47.

Lucca,¹⁷⁰ was used in this way. Characteristic of his age, he was concerned more with its ancient than with its recent past. Yet his methods of procedure tell us much about the limitations on his understanding of the piece and, by implication, those of settecento scholarship in general. While noting the youthful features of the figure in the medallion, he was unaware that it represented a Byzantine emperor. He compared the bust to a medal of Commodus, even while arguing that its headdress resembled a papal tiara.¹⁷¹ Gori rejected this reading of the “mitre” but was, in turn, scarcely less puzzled by the figure’s identity. Observing its long hair, imperial garb, and association with the cross, he suggested that it must represent St. Helena.¹⁷² If, in the philological climate of eighteenth-century learning, images normally gave more trouble than texts, it is nonetheless worth a moment to consider the difficulties that Tommaso Maria Mamachi set for himself when he contemplated the triptych (Fig. 14) in his day in the Biblioteca Casanatense before it passed into the Barberini collection.¹⁷³ In the long inscription beneath the figure of Christ, ἐγὼ δὲ τοῦτω πᾶν ὑποστρώφω κέρασ, the savant translated the last word as *cornu* (horn) and cogitated at length on whether this term was used because of the material of which the triptych is made.¹⁷⁴ Of course the Greek word was intended figuratively to convey the powers that the Lord promises to bestow on the emperor.¹⁷⁵

The triptych itself was judged by Passeri to be inferior to another (also with broken hinges), now in the Museo Sacro in the Vatican (Fig. 15), that had recently been acquired by Pope Benedict XIV (1240–1758) from a noble family in Todi.¹⁷⁶ It is an interesting comment on mid-eighteenth-century tastes that the latter was held to be *elegantior*, presumably because its figures are more attenuated than those on the Casanatense triptych (Fig. 14). The zig-zag medallions, and perhaps the polychrome, on Benedict’s ivory may have appealed to eyes accustomed to Rococo decoration; be that as it may, Passeri rightly judged the two triptychs to be carved by different hands.¹⁷⁷ He was severe, however, on the reverse of the Museo Sacro object (Fig. 15), deeming it to be a recent addition (a “parergon”), with a Latin cross imposed on an originally blank field that had since been elaborated “Langobardico stylo.” Eccentric as this judgment may be, it is Passeri’s method that is of interest for it demonstrates the extent to which analyses “based on terms of identity and difference” had replaced the concern with “kinships, resemblances,

¹⁷⁰ See p. 258 above.

¹⁷¹ Donati, *Dittici* (note 138 above), 192.

¹⁷² This was by no means the only occasion on which Gori had trouble with gender. Earlier (*Thesaurus*, II, 259–66) he had identified the figure of the empress (the so-called Ariadne), then in the Riccardi collection in Florence and now in the Bargello (Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten* [note 111 above], no. 51), as “forsitan Iustini-ani Imp. Aug.,” and its companion piece in Vienna (*ibid.*, no. 52) as Justin II.

¹⁷³ The Casanatense was the library of the Convento della Minerva in Rome. The long discussion in T. M. Mamachi, *Origines et antiquitates christianae*, V (Rome, 1850; Rome, 1755), 414–23 and pls. VI, VII, shows that the triptych’s hinges had already caused the damage evident today before it began its peregrinations in Rome. For this perennial weakness in the construction of Byzantine diptychs and triptychs, see Cutler, *Hand of the Master* (note 2 above), 149–50. See also note 121 above.

¹⁷⁴ Mamachi, *Origines*, 417.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Ps. 17:3 (18:2) and Luke 1:69. On this signification, see W. Bauer, F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, 1957), 430, s.v. κέρασ, definition 3. I am grateful to Nicolas Oikonomides for useful discussion on this point.

¹⁷⁶ C. Rizzardi in *Splendori* (note 53 above), no. 70.

¹⁷⁷ Passeri in Gori, *Thesaurus* (note 49 above), III, 217–32, makes no mention of the color so prominent today on the object. On this question, see Cutler, *Hand of the Master* (note 2 above), 210–11.

and affinities" that, for Foucault,¹⁷⁸ was the mark of Renaissance thought. Passeri had, moreover, the tools that he needed for a comparative approach, equipment unavailable in the sixteenth century or earlier. Seeking to verify the costume of the martyrs and apostles on the ivory in the Museo Sacro, as he had tried to check the form of the cross on the reverse, he adduced the garments depicted in the Menologion of Basil II, available in the illustrated edition of this manuscript published a generation earlier by Cardinal Alessandro Albani.¹⁷⁹

Before becoming a cardinal, Albani had been a collector and dealer in antiquities.¹⁸⁰ The desire to authenticate one's own possessions, to verify objects that were on offer, and to document those that one sold, was a powerful stimulus to scholarly research and the systems of comparison and classification that supported it. Such information was exchanged through personal intercourse and, increasingly, by means of the printed word—the same instrument makes it possible for us to discover that, for example, a single Florentine family, the Riccardi, owned major Byzantine ivories like the Berlin Forty Martyrs and the Apostles plaque now in Vienna,¹⁸¹ in addition to such late antique works as the Milan Basilius, the empress plaques now in the Bargello and Vienna, and the so-called Roma and Constantinopolis diptych also in Vienna.¹⁸² More shadowy and perhaps more important than the books in which such pieces were published was the network of scholars in the employ of rich patrons.¹⁸³ Only through the ephemeral literature can we today glimpse the discussions that preceded formal publication, but a glance at the *Novelle letterarie* is sufficient to identify the main figures in this texture. The periodical was run from the Biblioteca Riccardiana, where Gabriele Riccardi, himself housed in the Palazzo Medici, had appointed Giovanni Lami librarian. Encouraged by Muratori, the indefatigable producer of the *Rerum italicarum scriptores*, Lami edited the Greek fathers whose manuscripts were already in the Riccardiana or brought there under his aegis.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁸Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (as in note 9 above), 68. On the role of visual comparison in 17th-century studies, see I. Herklotz, "Das Museo Cartaceo del Cassiano dal Pozzo und seine Stellung in der antiquarischen Wissenschaft des 17. Jahrhunderts," in *Documentary Culture: Florence and Rome from Grand-Duke Ferdinand I to Pope Alexander VII*, ed. E. Cropper, G. Perini, and F. Solinas (Bologna, 1992), 81–107.

¹⁷⁹*Menologium Graecorum iussu Basilii imperatoris graece olim editum* (Urbino, 1727). This version was also consulted by Mamachi, *Origines*, V, 421 n. 4, when he published the Palazzo Venezia diptych. On the history of the MS in the 16th century, see Nelson, "Italian Appreciation and Appropriation" (note 7 above), 217–18 and note 187 below.

¹⁸⁰Albani had started as an archaeologist, "assai spesso senza eccessivi scrupoli," who excavated in order to produce objects for the market. As early as 1728 he sold a group of statues to the king of Poland, provoking fears of the depletion of works of art in Rome. See G. Sofri in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 1 (Rome, 1960), 596–97, s.v. Albani, Alessandro.

¹⁸¹Passeri in Gori, *Thesaurus* (note 49 above), III, 9–10; Mamachi, *Origines*, V, 416 n. 5 (= Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Elfenbeinskulpturen* [note 30 above], II, nos. 10, 44).

¹⁸²F. Buonaruotti, *Osservazioni sopra tre ditici antichi d'avorio* (Florence, 1716), 245–46; Gori, *Thesaurus*, II, 259–66, 267–72; Donati, *Dittici* (note 138 above), 225–28 (= Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Elfenbeinskulpturen*, II, nos. 5, 51, 52, 38).

¹⁸³For a detailed study of the family with which we are here concerned, see P. Malamina, *I Riccardi di Firenze: Una famiglia e un patrimonio nella Toscana dei Medici* (Florence, 1977). Their role as patrons of art and literature across successive generations is set out by E. Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries, 1527–1800: A History of Florence in the Age of the Grand Dukes* (Chicago, 1973), while the socioeconomic context of their operations is analyzed by P. Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge, 1981).

¹⁸⁴Many of these editions are still accessible in J.-P. Migne's *Patrologia graeca* (Paris, 1857–66).

Collaborating with the aging Gori, Lami's journal contained the first references to such objects as the "Roma" and "Constantinopolis," notices that were picked up and developed by Donati.¹⁸⁵ Lami, in turn, was the teacher of Angelo Maria Bandini, later in charge of the Biblioteca Laurenziana.

Similar networks could be reconstructed around other figures in other cities.¹⁸⁶ But their nature and *modus operandi* should by now be clear: learned men, men who were primarily philologists and secondarily archaeologists, in the service of dynasties or at least individuals who understood that the possession of artifacts and the sponsorship of research on their collections redounded to their glory. Scholarship was thus one of the trappings of splendor. It was not, of course, always so. In late-sixteenth-century Rome, the renewed interest in early Christianity that characterized the circle of Cardinal Cesare Baronio showed little concern with Byzantium beyond the ends to which the Counter-Reformation could turn such figures as Epiphanius of Cyprus, John of Damascus, and Stephen the Younger, who, in the cardinal's words, "represented incorporeal and invisible spirits by means of images."¹⁸⁷ Half a century onward, the Uniate exile Leo Allatios (Leone Allacci) was able to summon passing attention to Byzantine church design, but his writing¹⁸⁸ had more effect on liturgists than on architects and their patrons. Even in Venice, where the mosaics of San Marco or the contents of its treasury might have stimulated a revival in things Byzantine, the ducal sponsorship of Paolo Ramnusio's immense history of the Fourth Crusade¹⁸⁹ was prompted more by contemporary anti-Turkish policy than by interest in the antecedents or consequences of 1204. Byzantium had become an intellectual rather than an institutional preoccupation, a personal rather than a political concern.

In this light, it is the tastes of individual collectors, as they are reflected in the known provenances of objects and their echoes in scholarship, that are the best measure of the relative importance assigned to Byzantine artifacts. And, from the second half of the sixteenth century onward, the pursuit of such artifacts was never more than a marginal

¹⁸⁵ *Novelle letterarie* (1753), 49–50; for Donati, see *Dittici* (note 138 above).

¹⁸⁶ Thus, for example, around the Venetian Anselmo Costadoni (1714–85), who acquired at least four Byzantine or byzantinizing ivories (Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Elfenbeinskulpturen*, II, nos. 203–6). On him, see the entry by P. Preto in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. 30 (Rome, 1984), 266–68. For the Trivulzio family of Milan, who probably owned what became the Hirsch Christ (Fig. 9) and certainly half a dozen late antique ivories, see Seregini, *Don Carlo Trivulzio* (as in note 119 above).

¹⁸⁷ C. Baronius, *Annales ecclesiastici a Christi nato ad annum 1198*, IX (Rome, 1588), 35B, 269B–C. On the activities of Baronio and his circle, see the valuable collection of studies, *Baronio e l'arte: Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi, Sora, 10–13 ottobre 1984*, ed. R. de Maio et al. (Sora, 1985). In the same period, the MS of the Menologion of Basil II was used by Cardinal Federico Borromeo in the belief that it would guarantee authentic portraits of the saints of the Eastern church. See P. M. Jones, *Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana: Art Patronage and Reform in Seventeenth-Century Milan* (Cambridge-New York, 1993), 190.

¹⁸⁸ E.g., Leo Allatios, *The Newer Temples of the Greeks*, trans. A. Cutler (University Park, Penn., 1969), and, more recently, T.-J. M. Cerbu, "Leone Allacci (1587–1669): The Fortunes of an Early Byzantinist" (Ph. D. diss., Harvard University, 1986).

¹⁸⁹ P. Ramnusio, *Della guerra di Costantinopoli per la restitutione de gl'Imperatori Comneni, fatta da' Sig. Venetiani, et Francesi, l'anno 1204* (Venice, 1604). It is noteworthy that the second edition (1634) is dedicated not to the doge but to Richelieu. Ramnusio's book remains, however, a rich, if late, source that goes far beyond his confessed models, Villehardouin and Choniates, and is informed by direct knowledge of objects in the Venetian treasury. It is undeservedly neglected.

activity for collectors. Istanbul, for example, would remain a prime market for antiquities into the eighteenth century,¹⁹⁰ yet how Italians chose to respond to this opportunity is epitomized in the observations of Sansovino on the *museo* of one Venetian procurator:

[S]e all' hora il Patriarca era il primo nella città, hora il Procurator Contarini non è secondo, havendo con infinita sua spesa fatto portar (come tuttavia ancor procura) da Athene, da Costantinopoli, dalla Morea, e da tutte quasi le Isole dell' Archipelago diverse figure, et intiere, et spezzate antichissime di gran pregio; con le quali ha adornato il suo studio fin' hora maravigliosamente.¹⁹¹

He goes on to list the “figure . . . grandi al naturale”: Augustus, Claudius, Trajan and so on. The collections of highly placed churchmen likewise showed no preference for Christian objects from the East. It is remarkable that the great connoisseur Angelo Maria Querini—who, after 1730, acquired the “Loving Couples” diptych that had belonged to Pietro Barbo,¹⁹² enframed it with his own blazon,¹⁹³ and added it to a collection that included the diptychs of Boethius and the Lampadii¹⁹⁴—is not recorded as the owner of any Byzantine piece. Even the taste for the “rosette caskets,” decorated with what are always taken to be mythological scenes, and which begin to be noticed in eighteenth-century correspondence,¹⁹⁵ is perhaps best explained as a parallel, if not a sequel, to the predilection for classical ivories depicting putti, Bacchic figures, Hercules, and scenes of sacrifice described in inventories of the same period.¹⁹⁶

The fact that Byzantine secular art ranked scarcely higher than religious expressions in the inclinations of collectors, and that objects in both areas yielded to the vestiges of Greco-Roman civilization, suggests that the underlying explanation is to be found not in Enlightenment prejudice against the notion of the sacred but in a preference for what was older. In the axiology of collecting, the age of a thing reinforces its interest, aesthetic and economic, no matter what value had originally been attributed to it.¹⁹⁷ There is no doubt that eighteenth-century scholarship made known a number of recently acquired and/or previously unsignaled Byzantine objects. Against the *opinio communis* that the majority of pieces now in the West had lain undiscovered in the West since the late Middle Ages, at which time they are supposed to have had profound impact on Latin production, these disclosures constitute important corrections. Yet the emphasis in these reports, insofar as they were at all concerned with the objects that have preoccupied us, is

¹⁹⁰T. F. Madden, “The Serpent Column of Delphi in Constantinople: Placement, Purposes, and Mutilations,” *BMGS* 16 (1992), 142.

¹⁹¹F. Sansovino and G. Stringa, *Venezia città nobilissima* (Venice, 1604), cols. 258r–259v, cited in *Collezioni di antichità a Venezia* (note 112 above), 56.

¹⁹²See p. 254 above.

¹⁹³G. Panazza, “L’incorniciatura del dittico queriniano” in *Miscellanea Queriniana in ricordo dell’II° centenario della morte del Cardinale Angelo Maria Querini* (Brescia, 1961), 249–53.

¹⁹⁴Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten* (note 111 above), nos. 6, 54.

¹⁹⁵The earliest, to my knowledge, is the box in Cividale (Goldschmidt and Weitzmann, *Elfenbeinskulpturen* [note 30 above], I, no. 27).

¹⁹⁶See, for example, the inventory of the Museo Carpegna (1741) in *Documenti inedite* (note 125 above) II, 183–95.

¹⁹⁷On this question, see B. Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), 10–11.

on artifacts of the late Roman¹⁹⁸ rather than the medieval Greek world. The discovery—one might almost say the invention—of Byzantine art had to wait upon impulses born of Romantic philhellenism and the state of the antiquities market of a later era.

Pennsylvania State University

¹⁹⁸The pace and scale of 18th-century erudition in this area can be inferred from the tables in R. Delbrueck, *Die Consulardiptychen und verwandte Denkmäler* (Berlin-Leipzig, 1929), xxvi–xxxiii. Of the 68 ivories, silver plates, and cameos discussed in this catalogue, only 8 were known to scholars before 1700; another 15 appeared in the period 1701–50; in the next half-century 12 more were added. The remaining 23 objects were all first reported in the 19th century.